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ABSTRACT

The guide is designed to encourage parents of children in elementary school French immersion programs to take an active role in the programs, and to provide practical information to support such participation. Sections address these topics: terminology concerning program types and other aspects of immersion instruction; the rationale for learning a second language; the evolution of immersion education and program types in Canada; issues of concern to parents if they do not speak French or are unfamiliar with immersion education; making the most of communication with teachers and school; reading and writing instruction and home practice; options in secondary school and beyond; the importance of French outside school; solving student problems and concerns; students with special needs; student and graduate views on French immersion; a brief history of French immersion in Alberta; extracurricular French opportunities and resources; and sources for additional information (speakers, workshops, conferences, further reading for both parents and students). (MSE)

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yes, you can HELP!

A GUIDE FOR
FRENCH IMMERSION PARENTS

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EDUCATION
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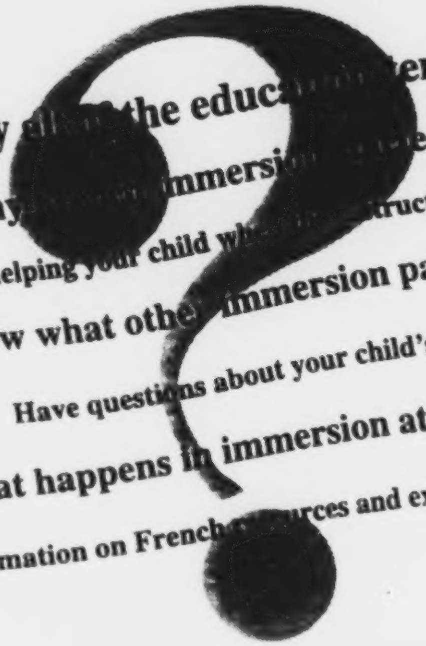

Confused by [illegible] the educ[illegible]erms you're hearing?

Wonder why [illegible] immersi[illegible]ed and how it works?

Concerned about helping your child w[illegible]truction is in French?

Want to know what other immersion parents have learned?

Have questions about your child's suitability for the program?

Worried about what happens in immersion at the secondary level?

Looking for information on French [illegible]rces and extracurricular activities?

If you've answered "yes" to any of these questions, this book is for you!

There's no denying the vital role that you play in your child's learning. Today, more than ever before, parents have access through books, pamphlets, speakers, workshops and the media, to information on how to effectively support their children's education.

Like other parents, you are constantly being encouraged to take an active role rather than leave education entirely to the school system. However, if you've chosen French immersion for your child, you may be concerned that you won't be able to fulfil that supporting role. Recognizing the need to provide parents like you with clear and complete information about French immersion, Alberta Education's Language Services Branch and the Alberta Branch of Canadian Parents for French (CPF) agreed in the fall of 1994 to undertake this project. The authors have relied on their joint 30 years of experience as unilingual immersion parents as well as their combined 33 years of work with other parents, educators and researchers as active members of CPF.

Yes, You Can Help! is meant to be of assistance not only during the first few years of your child's immersion education but right through to graduation. It's designed as a reference, to be taken down from the shelf whenever new stages are approached or new questions arise. We hope it will help you put the "French" part of your child's education into perspective.

You *can* help your child in French immersion!

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CONTINUOUS
WHOLE

"What do all those terms mean?"

French isn't just a subject like math or social studies!

For those who are confused, here's a guide to the French education terminology now most commonly used in Canada.

French programs

Core French - French taught as a subject for one period each day or a few times a week. This may begin at any time from kindergarten to grade 10 (depending on the local school board). It is also known in Alberta as "**French as a second language**" or "**FSL**" and in some other provinces as "**basic French**" or "**Français de base**." The objective is to provide students with a basic knowledge of French (the depth of this knowledge will vary according to the length and intensity of the program) and an interest in and appreciation of the French culture.

Extended core - a program in which one or two subjects (e.g., social studies, physical education) are taught in French in addition to core French. The core French program may begin at the same time as or precede the extended core program by several years. The objective of this additional exposure to French is to increase the students' French language skills.

French first language (FFL) - the provincial program taught in French for Francophone students (that is, children who have at least one Francophone parent—see Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms). You may also hear it called the "**Francophone program**." The objective is full mastery of French as a mother tongue, full fluency in English, and a sense of identity with and belonging to the French community.

French as a second language (FSL) - a term most often used to include all programs meant to teach French to non-Francophone children (that is, core French, extended core and immersion). In Alberta, "**FSL**" is used to refer to core French.

French immersion - a program in which French is the language of instruction for a significant part of the school day; that is, several or all subjects are taught in French. Immersion is designed for students whose first language is not French. The objective is full mastery of the English language, functional fluency in French, as well as an understanding and appreciation of the French culture. As with core French, the expected outcome is directly related to the total amount of exposure to the language.

French immersion programs

Early - a program beginning in kindergarten or grade 1. (also called **"immersion précoce"**)

Middle - a program beginning in grade 4 or 5. Middle immersion is the least common of the three starting points and is not offered anywhere in Alberta. (also known as **"intermediate immersion"**)

Late - a program beginning in grade 6 or later, sometimes but not necessarily after a few years of core French. (also known as **"immersion tardive"**)

Continuing - refers to the continuation at the secondary level of any of the above programs. Sometimes called **"post immersion"** or **"secondary immersion."** Some school boards use the term **"extended French"** if only French language arts and one or two other subjects are taught in French.

Total - an immersion program which for the first few years utilizes French for 75-100% of class time. English language arts is usually introduced in grade 2 or 3. Even if the relative amount of French decreases significantly in later grades, the early intensive exposure to the second language gives this program its name.

Partial - a program which has less than 75% but at least 50% of class time with French as the language of instruction (less than 50% is considered to be "extended core"). English language arts is part of the curriculum from the beginning. (also known as a **"bilingual program"**)

schools offering French programs

Dual track - a school in which both the French immersion and English programs exist side-by-side

Immersion centre - a school in which only French immersion is accommodated. (also known as a **"single track"** school)

Francophone (or **"French"**) - a school in which only the French first language program is accommodated

Triple track - a school with three programs (e.g., English, immersion, and French first language programs)

O r terms you might encounter

There are many other terms which you might encounter during the course of your child's education, whether he is in the French immersion or English program.

Additive bilingualism - refers to the acquisition of a second language which does not have a negative impact on the individual's first language and culture (see "subtractive bilingualism")

Allophone - a person whose native or principal language is neither English nor French

Anglophone - a person whose native or principal language is English

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) - unable to focus, very easily distracted, interrupts frequently, talks excessively (an individual with ADD may be but is not necessarily hyperactive)

Aural - related to hearing

Child-centred - refers to educational practices which focus on the needs of the individual child (see "teacher-centred")

Cognition - the mental processes by which knowledge is acquired

Combined grade - see "multi-grade class"

Cooperative learning - learning by working in small groups on a common task

Dictée - spelling exercise/test - because in French many words change according to the context (for example, the spelling of an adjective will change to agree with the gender and number of the modified noun), it is traditional for French spelling exercises to involve whole sentences rather than word lists.

Division I - grades 1-3 **Division II** - grades 4-6

Dyslexia - an inability to read or an extremely slow acquisition of reading skills; for example, all of the letters or even the whole page of type appears reversed. (Note: most reading difficulties are not due to dyslexia)

Early Childhood Services (ECS) - the term that has been used in Alberta for the kindergarten year

Elementary - kindergarten to grade 6

Exceptional students - those in need of special educational programs because of behavioural, communicative, intellectual, learning or physical characteristics

Fine motor skills - the ability to use small muscle groups (e.g., threading a string through holes, writing)

Francophone - a person whose native or principal language is French

Francophile - a non-Francophone who shows particular sympathy for the language, culture and aspirations of French-speaking Canadians

Gifted and talented students - students capable of exceptional performance in one or more areas of general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative or productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts and athletic ability

Grammar - the rules governing the correct use of words within a language

Gross motor skills - the ability to use large muscle groups (e.g., walk, catch a ball)

Hyperactivity - excessive gross motor activity (such as running or climbing, an inability to sit still) which is often haphazard, poorly organized, and not goal directed

Integration - the practice of meeting with appropriate support the physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs of students with exceptional needs in regular classes in neighbourhood or local schools

Interference - incorrectly applying the rules or structures of one language to another language

International Baccalaureate - an internationally recognized two-year pre-university program for highly motivated, academically oriented secondary students

Language arts - the subject which focuses on reading, writing, listening, speaking and literature

Learning disabilities - deficits in cognitive processing of information via mechanisms such as attention, perception or memory, for example. Learning disabilities are found in children of average and above average intelligence and remain into adulthood.

Mainstreaming - see "integration"

Metacognition - the conscious awareness by an individual of the ways in which he is learning

Metalinguistic - the conscious awareness by an individual of the ways in which language works, and the ability to manipulate language in the service of thinking and problem solving

Multi-grade class, multi-aging - a class involving students from more than one grade level

Oral - related to speaking

Peer tutoring - the practice of students assisting other students

Phonics - refers to the principles that describe the relationships between sounds and the printed letters and symbols of language

Secondary - grades 7-12 (junior high is grades 7-9, senior high is grades 10-12)

Semantic - having to do with the meanings of words

Split class - see "multi-grade class"

Subtractive bilingualism - refers to the acquisition of the socially dominant language which undermines and perhaps even replaces the individual's first language and culture

Syntax - the way in which words are used to form sentences, clauses or phrases

Teacher-centred - educational practices which are content-centred with little regard for individual students' needs and learning styles (see "child-centred")

Transfer - applying the knowledge and skills learned in one language to a situation in which another language is used

Whole language - an approach in which ideas are first introduced as a whole, after which specific language structures are taught in context and lessons are geared to meet the interests and needs of individual students; whole language does not exclude the explicit teaching of grammar, spelling or phonics—but this instruction is undertaken in such a way that the student understands its relevance, via teaching techniques best suited to the child.

Why
LEARN A SECOND LANGUAGE
2

When making educational choices for their young children, more and more parents are recognizing that knowing a second language is an important skill in today's ever-shrinking world—and will be even more important in their children's future.

Consider the many advantages!

Céréale
Faite
d'avoine
entière

Knowing a second language can:

- increase your child's personal pleasures such as the enjoyment of literature, art, music, theatre, travel and personal relationships;[1]
- increase his understanding of and respect for other peoples and other cultures;[2]
- help him to understand more about himself, his country and his fellow Canadians;[3]
- give him access to a larger pool of information and to more educational and career opportunities;
- give him a competitive edge in the job market anywhere in Canada and in many other countries.[4]

The process of learning a second language can also:

- develop the listening and learning skills as well as the self-discipline that are useful throughout life;
- increase cognitive abilities, creating a more flexible thinker;[5]
- enhance his knowledge of and improve his ability to communicate in his first language (he will be able to contrast and compare the two languages, and will take his own less for granted);
- make learning a third or fourth language much easier.[6]

Randall Litchfield of Canadian Business Magazine has explained it this way: "In business, having a second language is like having a second soul. A real asset for Canada has proven to be the ability of so many of its people to empathize with people of other lands through language. The demands of a globally competitive business environment are such that a modern education cannot be complete without significant language training."[7]

Canadian journalist and author Dominique Clift says: "The ability to step out of one's self, as it were, by means of a second language, enhances the ability to assess one's self in a more realistic and effective way. Similarly, it becomes much easier to discover the unconscious and crippling assumptions that are often the product of cultural blinkers. This is an extremely valuable asset in a world where technology is relentlessly undermining old ways of thinking."[8]

Or, as Heather Szpecht, a 10 year-old Calgary student put it: "Knowing both languages means twice as much of everything, just like a two for one deal! ... The two for one deal means you can have twice as many friends, twice as many job opportunities, and twice as many experiences. And that all adds up to more fun for me!"[9]

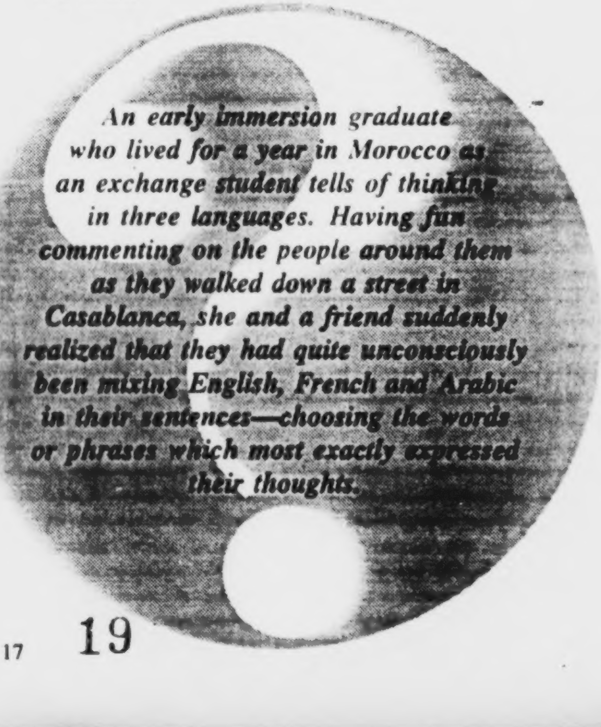
So Why French RATHER THAN SPANISH or JAPANESE

French is the natural second language for many Canadians because it is so widely used and accessible throughout the country.[10] With French we have the advantage of texts, references and library books prepared for the Francophone market in this country; large numbers of French-speaking teachers; access to role models and activities in Francophone communities as well as access to the French media; and sufficient interest in the language to support viable programs. It is far more difficult—and in many communities impossible—to offer this sort of intensive instruction in any other language.[11] In addition, a knowledge of Canada's two official languages helps children to better understand the history, development and politics of their own country.

French is spoken by about 120 million people world wide. It is an official language in about thirty countries and commonly used in another twelve. French is also an official language of the European Economic Community and of the United Nations. According to John Hewson of the Department of Linguistics at Memorial University in Newfoundland, "French and English are ... the main languages of diplomacy on the global scale. All embassies of all nations on earth use either English or French, or both, as languages of communication."[12]

French is a relatively easy second language for English speakers to learn because of the close historical relationship between the two languages. Their alphabets and sentence structures are very similar. In addition, many English words come from French or from Latin, a common root of both languages.

This is not to ignore other languages. Research in education has shown that mastery of a second language can make it easier to learn a third and fourth. Once a second language has been acquired, "the sky's the limit!"



An early immersion graduate who lived for a year in Morocco as an exchange student tells of thinking in three languages. Having fun commenting on the people around them as they walked down a street in Casablanca, she and a friend suddenly realized that they had quite unconsciously been mixing English, French and Arabic in their sentences—choosing the words or phrases which most exactly expressed their thoughts.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

"Why Bilingualism?" and "The Academic, Intellectual, and Linguistic Benefits of Bilingualism." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*, Canadian Parents for French, 1979.

"Our Brave New World." *More French, s'il vous plaît!*, Canadian Parents for French, 1985.

"What's the rest of the world doing about learning a second language?" *CPF Alberta News 43*, summer 1994.

"Language is the filter through which we understand reality" and "Bilingual Education: A Historical Perspective." *CPF National Newsletter* 62, summer 1993.

Footnotes

[1] "You can go see English and French movies, read English and French books, so you know about Shakespeare and Molière, Steven Spielberg and Claude Lelouch." - entry by Casey Shannon, Montreal, Quebec (age 13) in the 1994 "Write it up!/À vos crayons!" contest.

[2] "Because I am learning about two different cultures in Canada, I now have a strong desire to learn about other countries, cultures, and their languages." - Adam Pillidge, Stony Plain, Alberta (age 12) in the 1993 "Write it up!/À vos crayons!" contest.

[3] "Imagine: young Canadians, speaking each other's language, enjoying each other's literature, films, songs, understanding each other's problems, hopes and dreams. How much richer this country would be! And how peaceful and secure would be the future of Canada!" - Channah Weinstangel, Thornhill, Ontario (age 11) in the 1993 "Write it up!/À vos crayons!" contest.

[4] For example, in 1993, graduates of the Toronto Board of Education's French immersion programs were surveyed. In total, responses were received from 414 individuals who had graduated between 1981 and 1993. "When asked whether knowledge of French had helped to get their present job, 26% of respondents said 'yes.' Significantly, the largest 'yes' answer came from the full-time workers (36%). When asked whether they actually used French in their present job, 35% of respondents said 'yes.' Again, the group of full-time workers record a significantly higher 'yes' response rate at 58%." - "FSL: Learning French Matters in Toronto Schools." Toronto Board of Education and the Toronto Chapter of Canadian Parents for French. October 1993 (page 16).

[5] "The development of additive bilingualism and biliteracy skills entails no negative consequences for children's academic, linguistic or intellectual development. On the contrary, although not conclusive, the evidence points in the direction of subtle metalinguistic, academic and intellectual benefits for bilingual children." - "The Academic, Intellectual and Linguistic Benefits of Bilingualism." James Cummins, PhD. *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* (page 91).

[6] "We have found that an Anglophone who already speaks French will find it easier than a unilingual Anglophone to learn not only a Latin language but also such very different languages as Arabic or even Mandarin. ... The well-known psychological barrier simply disappears after learning a second language; hence the importance of bilingualism." - Sandro d'Addario, Director General of Berlitz Language Centres of Canada as quoted in *Language and Society* 39, summer 1992 (page 32).

[7] Commentary to Canadian Parents for French in 1992 and quoted in CPF's "Learning French Makes a World of Difference" public information campaign.

[8] "Towards the larger community." *Language and Society* 12, winter 1984 (page 65).

[9] From her first prize entry in the 1993 "Write it up!/À vos crayons!" contest.

[10] 25.2% of Canadians have French as their mother tongue. Of the 968,785 Francophones who live outside the province of Quebec, 53,280 live in Alberta (Statistics Canada, 1991 census).

[11] There are immersion or bilingual programs in other languages in some major Canadian cities, notably Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Edmonton and Vancouver. However, the students enrolled in these relatively small programs are usually from families in which the target language is spoken by the parents or grandparents.

[12] Letter to the editor which appeared in the St. John's *Evening Telegram* on April 18, 1992.

A MADE IN CANADA
SOLUTION!

How did French immersion start?

French immersion has been described as "the great Canadian experiment that worked."[1] As with all great inventions, it was created to fulfil a need and driven by those with a vision.

In the early 1960s, Anglophone parents across the country began pointing to their poor knowledge of French as proof that the French courses being offered in most English school systems in Canada were not working. While a few private schools offered better French programs, more and more non-Francophone parents began to demand improved opportunities for their children to learn Canada's other official language through publicly funded school systems.

By far the best known early experiment[2] in French immersion began in 1965 when, after a two-year struggle, twelve parents calling themselves the Saint Lambert Bilingual School Study Group received permission from their very reluctant school board to begin a French immersion kindergarten. This small group believed that their children could learn French as a living language without harm to their competence in English. They also had the good sense to insist that their fledgling program be carefully studied.

As encouraging research results were released by McGill University beginning in 1969, the word spread quickly and parent committees in other communities began to demand French immersion programs for their children. By 1977, a nationwide support group called Canadian Parents for French had formed and became a major catalyst in the spread of this new concept in second-language education.

Today, parents continue to be the major driving force behind French immersion—enrolling their children, supporting their children and their schools, helping with extracurricular activities, monitoring program quality, and promoting the program with governments, school boards, other parents and the public.

From 30 to 300,000

What began with a classroom of about 30 students in one community grew rapidly during the '70s and '80s. Over a period of about 15 years (from 1977 to 1992), French immersion enrolments increased by more than 650%! Today, it's the program of choice for more than 300,000 or almost 6%[3] of all Canadian students, in hundreds of large cities and small towns from Newfoundland to Vancouver Island to Yellowknife. Of these students, some 28,500[3] reside in Alberta, from Fort McMurray and Peace River in the north to Pincher Creek and Medicine Hat in the south.[4]

A Canadian export

Canadian researchers, educators and parent groups have gained respect worldwide and are often called upon to share their experiences and knowledge about learning a language the "immersion way." Today there are Canadian-style immersion programs in Australia, Finland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Spain and the United States.

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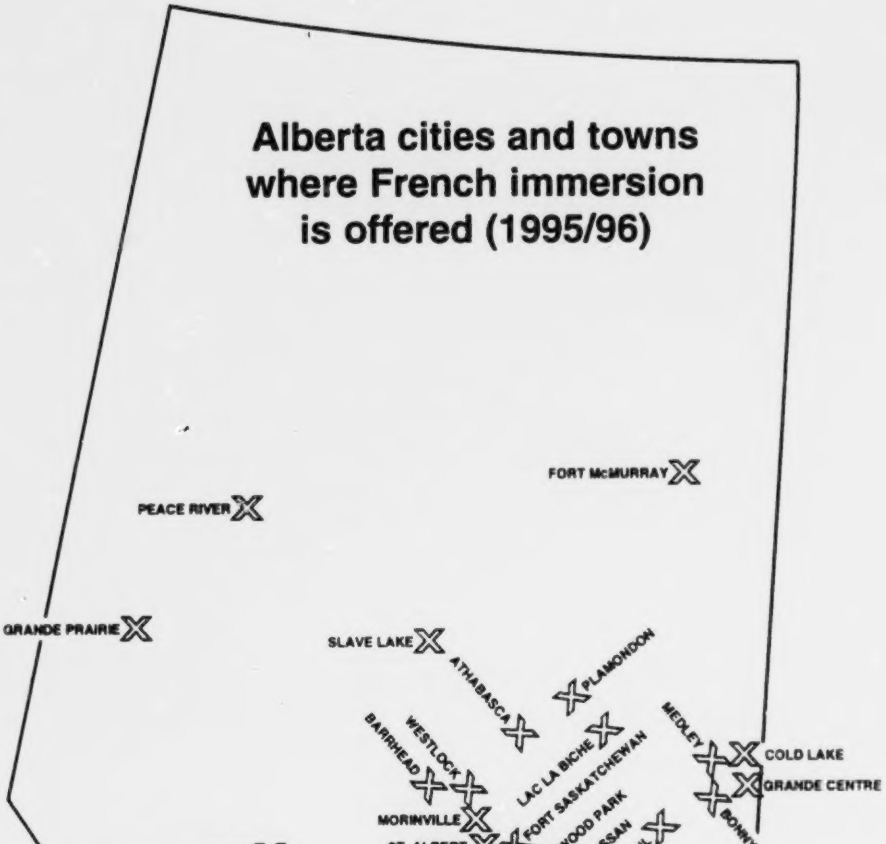
Alberta cities and towns where French immersion is offered (1995/96)


FORT McMURRAY
PEACE RIVER
GRANDE PRAIRIE
SLAVE LAKE
PLAMONDON
ATHABASCA
BARRHEAD
WESTLOCK
LAC LA BICHE
MEDLEY
COLD LAKE
GRANDE CENTRE
BONNYVILLE
FORT SASKATCHEWAN
SHERWOOD PARK
ARDROSSAN
ST. PAUL
MORINVILLE
ST. ALBERT
EDSON
HINTON
STONY PLAIN
SPRUCE GROVE
EDMONTON
BEAUMONT
LLOYDMINSTER
LEDUC
WETASKIWIN
ROCKY MTN. HOUSE
LACOMBE
RED DEER
COCHRANE
AIRDRIE
DRUMHELLER
CANMORE
CALGARY
MEDICINE HAT
LETHBRIDGE
PINCHER CREEK

Stephen Krashen, a well-known professor of linguistics at the University of Southern California claims, "Canadian immersion is not simply another successful language teaching program—it may be the most successful program ever recorded in the professional language teaching literature."[5]

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

"Évelyne Billey-Lichon, Canada's First Immersion Teacher." *Language and Society* 47, fall 1994.

Learning Through Two Languages: Studies of Immersion and Bilingual Education, pages 1-11.

The Bilingual Education of Children: The St. Lambert Experiment.

A listing of all French immersion programs across Canada is published annually by Canadian Parents for French in *The Immersion Registry.*

Enrolment statistics are published annually by Statistics Canada and in the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

What is immersion?

The basic characteristics of the program

French immersion is a highly successful approach to second language learning—an effective way for your child to become functionally fluent in a second language while achieving all of the objectives of the regular school program. Designed specifically for children whose first language is not French, the basic concept is simple: if you can't take the child to the language (that is, have him live where the language is the common means of communication), then bring the language to him (that is, bring it into the school as the primary means of communication). Although immersion first began in Quebec, it should be remembered that the parents who initiated the program "felt that their lack of competence in French contributed to and indeed was attributable in part to the two solitudes which effectively prevented them from learning French informally from their French-speaking neighbours."[6]

The parents who first developed this concept based it on a number of observations. First, they knew that young children who are exposed to a second language quickly develop accentless fluency. This is seen, for example, among children living in a foreign country who have a nanny who speaks a different language or whose parents use two different languages in the home. Older children and adults have far more difficulty learning another language and developing an authentic accent.

Second, they consulted with various experts, including Dr. Wallace Lambert of the Psychology Department of McGill University and Dr. Wilder Penfield of the Montreal Neurological Institute of McGill. This gave them insights into the social-psychological and cognitive aspects of bilingualism and the brain mechanisms underlying language functions.

Finally, they were confident that this home/school language switch would have no negative effect on their children's competence in English. After all, even though they were living in Quebec, their children were submerged in English. Unlike immigrant children whose home language is overwhelmed and often replaced by the language of their new country ("negative" or "subtractive" bilingualism), there was no fear that French would take precedence over English in the lives of the immersion students ("additive" bilingualism).

Thus there are six characteristics which define immersion programs:

1. the target language is acquired primarily by using it for meaningful communication within the school—that is, for instruction in other subjects (math, social studies, science, etc.);
2. the students all begin not knowing the target language, and instructional strategies and materials are designed with that in mind;
3. the target language is not the prevalent language of the community;
4. the program begins with intensive instruction in and via the target language by teachers fluent in that language, with instruction via the first language often increasing in later years;
5. instruction of subject material is never repeated in the two languages;
6. the program is expected to take several years to achieve its objectives (in most cases these objectives are defined as of the end of grade 12).

Some authorities also note the strong role of parents in establishing and supporting immersion as a fundamental feature of the program.[7]

> ***"It is because language is operating as a real mode of communication, a vehicle by which a child participates in a real event, communicating with and for a real audience, that French as the medium for this communication must be and is mastered by the child with amazing rapidity."[8]***

What does early French immersion look like?

There are now many variations on the immersion theme, with different beginning points and relative amounts of instruction in French and English. Alberta school boards offer the format that is by far the most common throughout Canada: early total immersion.[9]

Early total immersion typically means that most or all instruction is given in French for the first few years of school, with English language arts (ELA) introduced as a subject in the early grades.[10] In Alberta, 60-75% instruction in French is most common at the junior high level (grades 7-9). In grades 10-12, there is even more variation throughout the province, with schools offering anywhere from two to seven subjects (out of a total of eight) in French each year.

In all other aspects, the French immersion program in Alberta follows the same curriculum

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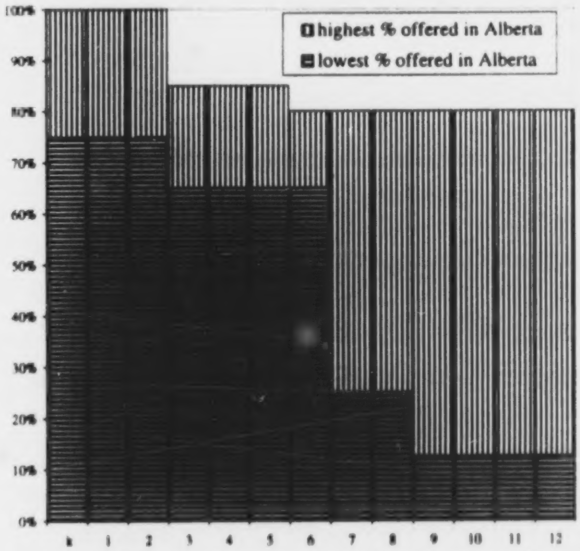
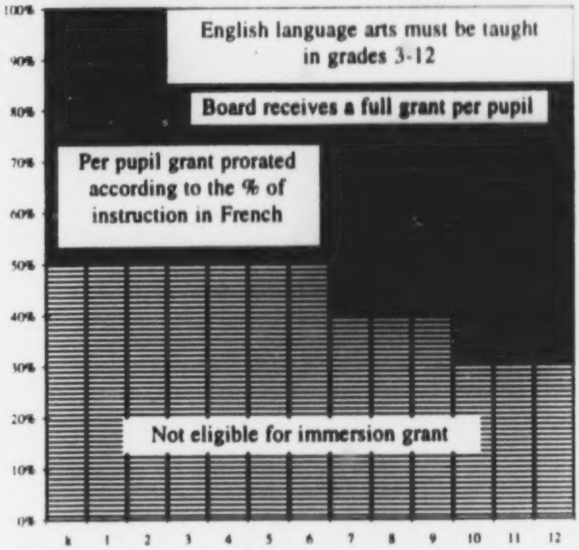
guidelines as the regular English program. Alberta Education's "Goals of Basic Education" apply to all students, regardless of the language of instruction.



The proportion of instruction in French varies from district to district, and sometimes even from school to school (graph based on information provided to Canadian Parents for French for *The Immersion Registry 1994/95*).



Historically, provincial and federal grants for Official Languages in Education have been provided to Alberta school boards offering French immersion on the basis of the proportion of instruction in French. (For current information, contact Alberta Education - see page 134).

Who is immersion for?

French immersion is sometimes labelled an elitist program. In fact, **it's a program of choice, open to all children of the appropriate age.** There are no selection criteria and no special fees for registration (except, of course, for private schools). Public information meetings and program announcements encourage all parents to consider the program for their children.

While most French immersion students are from English-speaking homes, a small but growing number come from homes where neither English nor French is the primary language. These students are learning English and French as their second and third, or even fourth and fifth languages.

Isn't it for Francophones?

In the early days of French immersion (from the late '60s to the mid '80s) in many Alberta communities, English and French-speaking students typically shared "immersion" classes. This arrangement was viewed by most immersion parents as a positive one because it gave their children a built-in opportunity to interact with their Francophone peers. However, it was not designed to meet the specific needs of the two groups of students.

Students whose first language is French have linguistic, educational, cultural and personal identity needs different from those learning French as a second language. Being surrounded by English 365 days a year protects an English-language student's first language skills and sense of being an Anglophone Canadian. That same environment consistently threatens and often totally overwhelms the minority Francophone's language and culture (subtractive bilingualism). Research shows that minority Francophone children can become fluent in English even if it is only used at school for one period a day.

French first language (FFL) schools were established in Alberta in the mid 1980s to meet the specific needs of Alberta's Francophone children as recognized in Section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. These schools not only teach all subjects (except English) in French, but also conduct all other activities in French: administration, announcements and assemblies, clubs and sports, report cards, parent/teacher conferences, and so on. They also become a focus of the Francophone community and family life. Programs, activities, communications and displays are designed to help foster a sense of identity and belonging to the French cultural and linguistic communities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

"The Point of View of a Francophone Outside Quebec." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*

How does it work?

The "gentle approach"

For your child, learning French the "immersion way" will be much the same as learning his first language. When he was a baby you talked and gestured while he watched and listened. Soon he began to associate your words and gestures with objects, actions and feelings. Before long he said his first words, and you were so pleased he was "talking" that all his gibberish and mispronunciations were exciting. He continued to watch and listen, gradually learning to repeat and imitate more acceptable speech as you praised his efforts. He gradually moved from single words and phrases to sentences, and so it went.

In a typical French immersion kindergarten classroom, the teacher uses French all of the time, speaking in English only if a student's health or safety is at risk (in which case the student will be taken aside for a private conversation). Gestures, mime, pictures and objects are used to help the children understand. Songs, poems, storytelling and choral speaking as well as routines or sequences of activities (such as beginning every day with a "bonjour" ritual and then calendar and weather routines[11]) are also used to help familiarize students with words and ideas and to encourage their earliest attempts to speak the language. Very quickly, through watching and listening, the students begin to recognize words and phrases, responding appropriately. They begin to sing along, join in the choral speaking, and pepper their sentences with a few French words.

Do you remember how you taught your child to say "thank you" when given something? In the immersion classroom, the teacher says "merci" each time a student gives her an item. When she hands something to a student, she also says "merci" and indicates that he's to imitate her. It doesn't take long, especially because he's already aware of the concept of thanking someone, for him to realize that in this setting (the French classroom) and with this person (the teacher), when he's given something, he should say "merci."

Immersion students learn to be good listeners. From the beginning, they have to pay very close attention to the teacher (at least, closer than do students taught in their first language). They must attend not just to words but also to gestures, body movements, intonation and expression. In addition to these clues, they pick up on the similarities between certain English and French words (e.g., "banane" and "banana"). The students are also sensitive to the teacher's responses to what they do and say.

The teacher also listens and observes carefully to verify what information the students possess and understand. On this basis, she consciously adapts her speech and classroom activities to assist the children.

For the first couple of years, the students are not expected to speak French at all times—there's absolutely no prohibition against students speaking in English. Rather, they're given positive encouragement to try out the new language. When they make mistakes, the teacher doesn't say they're wrong, but instead uses repetition and role modelling just as you did when your child was a baby.

In their report on a study comparing the reactions of children beginning immersion and English kindergartens, researchers Sandra Weber and Claudette Tardif explained, "The fact that not understanding the teacher's language seemed to be only a minor nuisance to the children could indicate that children are more tolerant of ambiguity than are adults. Even in their first language, young children are accustomed to not understanding everything adults say. In addition, they do not feel as socially awkward about not understanding as adults might in a similar situation, nor are they as reluctant to ask for help. Not knowing everything, relying on adults, and asking lots of questions are part of the socially accepted role of being a child. ... At the beginning of the year, the immersion kindergarten children often told us that they didn't understand *French*, but they were adamant in asserting that they *did* understand the *teacher*, who spoke almost exclusively in French. ... For most of the immersion students, the second-language feature quickly became a natural, normal aspect of classroom life, something they just took for granted."[22]

In all other aspects an immersion kindergarten is the same as an English kindergarten. The same kinds of themes and concepts are introduced and the same activities are carried out. The only exception is the inclusion of some aspects of French-Canadian culture.

At home you might hear your child using some French sounds and words as he plays. He might sing some of the French songs he learned at school. However, don't be surprised or worried if he doesn't utter a single French sound at this stage. French is the normal language of communication at school, but quite unnatural at home.

One father, convinced his daughter wasn't learning French because he never heard her use it at home, asked to sit in on her kindergarten class. When he arrived back home after just an hour, he explained, "I got bored because I didn't understand a word the teacher said. But those kids! They clearly understood because the teacher was always smiling at them and saying, 'très bien!' They were all speaking some French, joining in the songs, and generally having a good time. I'm sold!"

Early immersion has been called a "gentle" introduction to a second language because:

- the teacher addresses the class in French, but understands and responds to English;
- 5 and 6-year-olds love to learn by repetition, mimicking, and so on;
- young children's communication needs are not as complex as those of adults;
- young children are more tolerant of ambiguity than adults and don't feel as socially awkward as we do when something is not understood;
- a young child's vocal structures are more flexible than an adult's, making it easier to develop an authentic accent;
- young children have not yet developed psychological and attitudinal barriers against the acquisition of a second language;
- all the children are in the "same boat"—and often help each other.

Using PET scans (positron emission tomography) to follow the brain's consumption of sugar, the energy that cells use to carry out their work, neurologist Harry Chugani of the University of California - Los Angeles measured the activity level of brains at all ages, from infancy to old age.

"There was a big energy spurt between the ages of 4 and 10, when the brain seemed to glow like a nuclear reactor, pulsating at levels 225 per cent higher than adult brains. Learning a foreign language, math, a musical instrument—anything is easy during this time. Put a child in a foreign country and he learns the language fluently while his parents struggle and have an accent. ...

"'Who's the idiot who decided that youngsters should learn foreign languages in high school?' Chugani asks. 'We're not paying attention to the biological principles of education. The time to learn languages is when the brain is receptive to these kinds of things, and that's much earlier, in preschool or elementary school.'"[13]

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Beginning early immersion after kindergarte

A few Alberta school boards do not begin their early French immersion program until grade 1. If in grade 1 most or all of the students have had no previous exposure to French, the principles outlined above still apply. In this case the teacher will probably delay the introduction of reading instruction until the students have developed a good foundation in French (see "When do children learn to read?" on page 65).

It's not unusual for children to join the program in grade 1, usually because the family recently moved or only recently learned about French immersion. Some boards use their remedial teachers to work with these children in the early stages. In other cases, a Francophone teacher's aide or an official language monitor (see page 125) is available to spend some time on the students' language development. Teachers encourage the other children to help their new classmates.

On the other hand, it's extremely rare for a child to enter an early French immersion program after grade 1. Factors which must be considered in making such a decision include the child's academic ability, second language aptitude, motivation and work habits as well as the motivation and commitment of the parents, the size of the class, and the experience, ability and willingness of the teacher.

Further development of the language

As a general rule of thumb, children who participated in an immersion kindergarten (half days) will have gradually switched from English sentences with French words and phrases thrown in to French sentences interspersed with some English by Christmas of grade 1.

As students progress and their knowledge expands, the teacher introduces new vocabulary and language structures. At first this is done incidentally while talking about plants, animals, the seasons, families, and so on. Later it's done methodically as more complex subject matter is introduced. The teacher is constantly on the alert for occasions where language development can occur effectively.

Teachers use various techniques to help students develop accuracy and express their thoughts clearly. Spend time in a French immersion classroom and you'll often hear the teacher repeating what a student has said, making corrections to a word or pronunciation, or even offering another way to say the same thing. The teacher will also frequently ask questions which encourage a student to expand a statement or express an idea in more detail. This is, of course, in addition to the analytic teaching of vocabulary, grammar and syntax.

Various strategies are also used to encourage the students to speak in French instead of English. For example, there might be an "English chair" in the room. When a child doesn't know a word, it's permissible to use English but only if sitting on that chair. The other students or the teacher then help him out. Tokens or points are also sometimes used. Whenever a student hears another student use English (except, of course, if sitting on the special chair), he can give that student a token. At the end of each month, those with no tokens receive a small prize or special privilege.

Throughout an immersion program, teachers take advantage of occasions when language development can occur effectively and naturally. School or community activities such as field trips, drama presentations, choirs, public speaking and exchanges are frequently used to enrich language learning. These occasions also introduce students to the history and culture of French-speaking people, helping to give meaning and a "real-life" importance to the language (see page 85).

An immersion classroom is often noisy, with lots of talking, music, films, visitors and interaction: you can only learn a language by using it!

Immersion students don't learn to translate; rather, they acquire two distinct labels for one concept. At home, your child will call the little animal that purrs "a cat," at school, "un chat." He may not be able to answer the question, "How do you say 'cat' in French?"—while he can tell you what the teacher calls it!

What about the other subjects?

Just as speaking is based on listening and understanding, so are reading and writing based on speaking. By the time literacy skills are first introduced in the immersion classroom (see page 65), the children have a good beginning knowledge of the French language. The teacher builds on this knowledge using a variety of pre-reading and pre-writing activities to familiarize the students with any new vocabulary and structures they will encounter.

The first math and science concepts are introduced in early immersion just as they are in the English program. The ideas presented at the primary level are very concrete and easily developed with the use of visual aids and hands-on activities. Teaching techniques and materials which encourage peer interaction and activity-oriented learning continue to be used throughout all immersion grade levels to allow for daily use of the language by all students. By the time they are being exposed to more theoretical concepts, they have developed a very good understanding of French and a functional use of the language (see page 32).

For example, one educator explains this in relation to discovery-oriented hands-on activities in science education: "They are contextualized in the 'here and now'; students are actually working with concrete materials. Because of this, they can more easily comprehend meanings and negotiate these with the teacher or with other students if necessary. During these activities, students are making observations, descriptions and predictions using meaningful vocabulary. They are elaborating explanations, arguing about data, interpreting, and presenting conclusions. In the course of a single lesson, they are using a number of language functions. They are using the language in meaningful oral or written situations. Students are developing their competence in French as well as developing the many dimensions of scientific literacy."[14]

French immersion is an upward spiral: the more the children hear and read the language, in all subject areas, the better they will understand it; the better they understand it, the more

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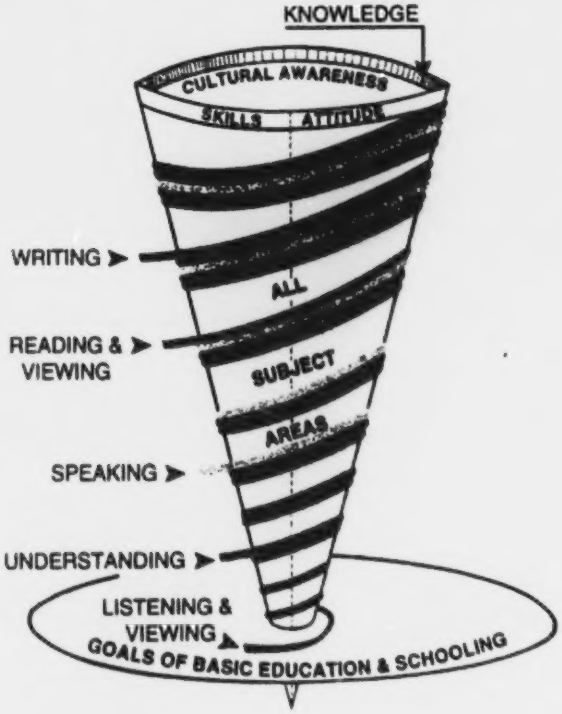
successful they will be in all subject areas. To find out more about what is taught in each grade, from grade 1 to grade 9, information booklets are available for each grade. "Curriculum Handbook for Parents" may be ordered from the LRDC (see p. 134).


KNOWLEDGE
CULTURAL AWARENESS
SKILLS
ATTITUDE
WRITING
ALL
READING & VIEWING
SUBJECT
AREAS
SPEAKING
UNDERSTANDING
LISTENING & VIEWING
GOALS OF BASIC EDUCATION & SCHOOLING

How well does it work?

According to the Canadian Education Association, "No educational program has been so intensively researched and evaluated in Canada as has French immersion. The effects of the program on the acquisition of French-language as well as English-language skills and the academic achievement of French immersion students have been well documented, and research shows that the program works."[15]

Because very little research has been done comparing Alberta students to their peers (quantitative studies which carefully choose comparison groups and control for variables such as I.Q. and socioeconomic status), parents and educators in this province have had to look at results from other parts of the country. Most commonly cited are the hundreds of studies done in Ontario (particularly by the Modern Languages Centre of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and by several of the larger school boards), in the Montreal area, in British Columbia and in New Brunswick.

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While French immersion programs have been subjected to much careful study, they have also been the target of criticism over the years. Much has been constructive and has led—and continues to lead—to improvements in the program. However, some of the criticism is based on misconceptions or questionable studies, while other reports have quoted valid research, researchers and other supporters of French immersion out of context. Parents and educators are urged to read with care. For some sources of information, see the section beginning on page 135.

The performance of French immersion student on Alberta Education's grade 3, 6 and 9 achievement tests and grade 12 diploma examinations clearly indicate that the results of these quantitative studies are applicable to immersion students in this province.

Following is a very brief summary of the research into the outcomes of early French immersion.

How good is their French?

Researchers usually measure success in a language by looking at the various skills involved in communication: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Then, through studies of carefully chosen groups, they compare French immersion students with their peers in other French second language programs, such as late immersion or core French, and with Francophone students. Some studies also compare them with other criteria, such as using the federal Public Service Commission's language exams.

Early total immersion students soon understand what they hear and read. By grade 5 or 6, when tested on topics to which they have been exposed either in or out of school, their listening comprehension is similar to that of their Francophone counterparts. The development of reading comprehension does not lag far behind. In other words, they will not be familiar with as wide a range of topics as native speakers of French, but if they are acquainted with the specific vocabulary associated with a subject, they understand almost as well as Francophone students of the same age.

By junior high, their spoken and written French is quite functional. They are well able to communicate factual information, thoughts and ideas but they do make some errors in grammar and syntax. Students do not reach native-like competence by the end of grade 12 but do achieve a high level of functional fluency (see "Will my child be completely bilingual?" on page 37 and "Can't the school do it all?" on page 44). They should be able to score in the highest or second highest levels on federal government public service exams. Immersion students themselves have recognized their weakness and have rated themselves less confident in speaking and writing than in listening and reading.[16] This is a normal progression in the learning of any language—very few of us can speak or write our native tongue to the same level of refinement as the material we are capable of understanding.

The late W. Russ McGillivray, a well-known French immersion educator, explained it this way: "They [the students] are aware of their deficiencies and most immersion graduates criticize the lack of choice of options in secondary school and the lack of opportunities to use French. However, they also admit that they do not watch much French TV nor take many opportunities of reading or speaking French outside of school."[17]

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Studies of the various French second language programs clearly show that the more exposure students have to French, the better their communication skills and the greater their confidence in their ability to use the language. In fact, rarely if ever are immersion and core French programs compared any more, as the results are so dramatically different.

But what about their English?

One of the most common worries of French immersion parents is how well their children will do in English—after all, there's little point in learning French if their English suffers.

The results of 30 years of studies undertaken from St. John's to Victoria are clear and consistent: early total immersion students tend to lag behind English-program students in the more technical aspects of the language (e.g., capitalization and spelling) until they have had a year or two of English language arts. However, by grade 5 or 6 (even if this subject has not been introduced until grade 3 or 4), they perform as well as their English-program peers.

Some students are reading before they start school; some will begin on their own to read in English once they have acquired this skill in their second language. Others need some specific instruction, but the "transition year" English language arts teachers can build on what the students already know about reading (see page 67). Researchers Sharon Lapkin and Merrill Swain of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education explain, "It seems clear that once literacy skills are well established in one language, they transfer readily and rapidly to the other language."[18] Swain adds that the students' constant exposure to English in the home, in the community and in the media is a factor in this success.[19]

Further, many studies have found that from late elementary on, early total immersion students often outperform their English-program counterparts in some English skill areas. It's speculated that enhanced abilities in a student's first language may be the result of a greater awareness of language in general and the ability to compare and contrast the two language systems. Also, immersion students receive a "double dose" of language arts as compared to English-program students.

One recent study explored the longer-term effects of immersion programs on what was termed "high level psycholinguistic functioning" in English (that is, language ability that is unlikely to surface in standardized achievement tests administered in school). Results showed equal proficiency between the English-speaking university students who had completed an early immersion program and those who had attended a regular English program, except in the area of figurative and metaphoric use of language. In this area the immersion group showed a dramatically higher understanding and use of figurative (poetic) language than did the non-immersion group. Researcher Gerald Neufeld suggests that, "While much work remains in this area, the idea that the acquisition of a new language can promote poetic use of one's own mother tongue is provocative and certainly worth further scrutiny."[20]

Alberta Education's annual achievement tests provide further information. These tests, written by students in grades 3, 6 and 9 are designed to assess whether groups of students (for instance, those within a particular school or school board) meet provincial standards. The Student Evaluation Branch has reported, "Students who wrote both the English and French language arts tests consistently obtained higher scores on the English language arts test than did students who received instruction in English only. It is not known, of course, if the

French immersion students involved would have achieved higher or lower English language arts scores if they had been in a regular program. There is, at any rate, no evidence that the English language arts skills of students [in immersion] are any less than the skills of those students [in the English stream]."[21]

The "content subjects": math, social studies, science, etc.

Naturally, parents and educators are also concerned that immersion students might have difficulty learning academic material when it's taught in French, or have difficulty transferring that knowledge to English. The hundreds of studies that have looked into these students' mathematics, science and social studies achievement all conclude that early total immersion students do as well as their English-program counterparts. While their productive skills (speaking and writing) take longer to develop, their comprehension of French (listening and reading) very quickly reaches the level needed to receive instruction via that language.

"In addition," researcher James Cummins reports, "they [early total immersion students] are able to transfer their knowledge from one language to the other. For example, when mathematics is taught through French, early immersion students perform equally well whether tested in English or French."[22]

Alberta students also write annual achievement tests in mathematics, science and social studies. In all three subject areas, immersion students regularly show levels of achievement that are higher than the provincial levels for tests written in English. While it is important to understand that this is not a comparison of equivalent groups,[23] these results do serve to reassure us that French immersion students are, as a whole, very successful learners.

At the grade 12 level, immersion students in Alberta have the choice of writing diploma examinations in French or in English. As many as two-thirds of these students choose to write social studies and mathematics in French. Over a period of several years, the averages obtained by these students have been consistently higher than the averages of students writing the same diploma exams in English. Again, this is not a comparison of equivalent groups, but is reassuring data.

Social and psychological effects

Language and academic achievement aside, parents want to be sure their child's immersion experience will be positive in other ways.

Studies have found no evidence of emotional or social difficulties linked to a child's immersion experience. The gentle introduction to French in the early years of an immersion program (see page 26) helps to build students' confidence and ability to understand what is going on. Stresses experienced by children are often found to be related to factors other than immersion. In their study of kindergarten students, Weber and Tardif report, "We were very surprised at just how easily children adapted to the situation. ... If anything, it was the school-specific rather than the language-specific aspects of the classroom experience that seemed to pose a challenge to some of the children: separating from parents, getting used to the concept of recess (not going home), learning the classroom rules about how to behave, adjusting to the demands of an unfamiliar schedule and way of doing things—these seemed to be the real challenges in both the regular and immersion classrooms."[24]

Immersion and second language study seem, in fact, to enhance some aspects of students' social, psychological and intellectual development. Thinking and problem solving skills, for example, may actually be strengthened by intensive exposure to a second language. This could be the result of an increased understanding of how language works, a greater sensitivity to linguistic meaning, and greater cooperation between the hemispheres of the brain.

Students do not lose their cultural identity in an immersion program, but rather seem to maintain a strong sense of their own identity while developing a sensitivity towards other peoples and cultures. In particular, studies have shown that French immersion students develop a greater affinity for Francophones and recognize more readily the fundamental similarities and the deep-seated differences between Canada's two official language groups than do regular program students.

But my child is. . . !

Naturally, parents are concerned about making the right choice for each of their children, and one that is suited to their family situation.

Researchers have found that immersion students with a variety of difficulties—from learning disabilities to low intelligence to behavioural problems—will do as well academically as they could be expected to do in an English program, **provided they receive the same assistance as they would if enrolled in the English stream**. Studies also indicate that immersion is not likely to be the cause of learning difficulties; the same problems would arise in any educational setting (see "But my child is ...!" on page 98). Any student who can learn to communicate in his first language can acquire a second language through the immersion process.

The provision of equivalent assistance is fundamental to making French immersion suitable for all students. Thus, the outcome for certain children may be poor unless they receive ongoing specific assistance to meet their unique needs:

- those whose development of their first language is weak (e.g., understanding, oral expression and vocabulary are not well established), and
- those who have severe auditory processing difficulties (e.g., hearing impairments, difficulty discriminating between similar sounds, difficulty remembering or imitating what was just heard).

Researchers and educators also recognize parental support and commitment to the program as an important factor in the success of any immersion student. A parent who is very nervous about the program, is negative about French, or has unrealistic expectations can undermine a child's motivation to learn. On the other hand, parents who are confident and well informed are also likely to be able to work with educators to solve any problems their children may encounter.

In summary

In concluding this summary of the research pertaining to early French immersion, remember that many factors play a part in the overall success of any educational program: school setting, teachers, student motivation, parental support and involvement, curriculum and resource materials, to name just a few. For French immersion programs, other factors such as the percentage of French offered at each grade level and the level of administrative support can also influence the degree of success. Generally speaking though, much can be learned about the success of the program through controlled research studies.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Language Learning for French Immersion Students in the Transition Year: Information for Parents (also the booklets on this topic for school administrators and teachers).

Learning Through Two Languages: Studies of Immersion and Bilingual Education, chapters 2, 3, 4, and 7.

"Three Basic Questions About French Immersion: Research Findings" and "Beyond Bilingualism: Sociocultural Studies of Immersion." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*

Information on the results of the annual achievement tests and diploma examinations is available from the Student Evaluation Branch of Alberta Education. "Provincial Assessment of Students in French Immersion Programs: Special Report" (June 1990) discusses the issues involved in assessment testing for French immersion students.

Why "total" immersion?

Over the past three decades, early French immersion has evolved from what was often a "bilingual" program (partial immersion), in which half of the time was spent in English, half in French, to "total immersion." This occurred because research done throughout the country was so consistent. It showed that no matter when English language arts was introduced in the early years, the immersion students were on a par with their English-program peers in all skill areas within a couple of years (see page 32). However, teachers and parents were not satisfied with the students' levels of achievement in French. It was gradually realized that to develop a very high level of competence in French required more classroom time than was initially assumed.

Immersion works so well because the students are not just studying the language—they are using it in meaningful ways. The time spent in mathematics, social studies, music and other classes is also time spent learning French. But in order to use a skill for real purposes, you must first develop a certain level of competence. This is one of the reasons for the initial intense exposure to French in immersion programs: to bring the students up to speed in the language so that their academic progress in the other subject areas will not be delayed.

Remember: although it seems like children are in school for a long time, the average academic year is about 950-1,000 hours long—that's only about 20% of a grade 1 child's waking hours during the year. The other 80% of the time is spent exposed to English!

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Will my child be completely bilingual?

Early studies produced such positive results that enthusiastic supporters of early French immersion programs—parents and educators alike—often drew the conclusion that French immersion students would achieve native-like fluency in French and become fully bilingual. Many even thought children would achieve all of this by grade 6!

We know now, through the benefit of extensive study and commentary by researchers (see page 32) and personal experience with immersion students, that these expectations were unrealistic.

Language learning is a lifelong experience. How well we learn even our first language is influenced not only by our schooling, but also by our experiences, maturity, and the opportunities we have throughout our lives to hear, read and use language in all its forms—oral, written, casual, formal, etc. The milieu in which we live (that is, the language and culture most prevalent in the community, workplace and media) is also an important factor. For example, Francophones growing up in Alberta find it difficult to achieve and maintain full fluency in French because of the strong influence of our English milieu in their daily lives. On the other hand, people in many other countries more easily acquire second, third and fourth languages because of the opportunities to hear and use them in their communities.

Early total French immersion students spend, on average, less than 8,000 hours being instructed via French from kindergarten through grade 12 (see the chart on page 44), compared to more than 63,000 waking hours surrounded by English in and outside of school during these years. Studies and program objectives now closely link expected levels of competence in French for second-language learners with the intensity and frequency of time spent learning and using that language.

Several other factors also influence students' success: student attitude and motivation, parental involvement and encouragement, the use of French outside of school in a variety of situations, the quality of instruction, the curriculum—in other words, the desire to learn and the quality and quantity of opportunities to learn and practice. So, what can you realistically expect your child to be able to accomplish after 13 years (kindergarten to grade 12) of French immersion?

- He should be able to speak French accurately and with increasing spontaneity in informal conversations of a social nature. He should also be able to participate effectively, if more cautiously, in more formal discussions on academic or more abstract topics.
- He should be able to understand written texts of various levels of difficulty related to concepts he has studied in class or to which he has been exposed outside of school. He would have no difficulty in reading newspapers, magazines and reports as well as understanding and appreciating most French literary works.
- His writing skills in French should allow him to express clearly his ideas both on topics related to his studies and on issues and events of everyday life. Writing for a variety of practical purposes such as personal and business letters, resumés and oral presentations should be part of his repertoire.

Overall objectives for early total French immersion are:

- To enable students to achieve equivalent levels of learning in the content of all subjects taken, whether they are instructed in English or in French.
- To enable students to achieve at a level in English language arts equivalent to regular program pupils within three years of beginning instruction in that subject.
- To enable students to become functionally bilingual, that is:
  - to be able and willing to participate easily in conversation in French and English,
  - to be able to take further education as appropriate to their abilities and interests with French as the language of instruction, and
  - to be able to accept employment where French is the language of work.
- To provide opportunities for students to gain insight into the common attitudes and values of the French-speaking community.

Footnotes

[1] "Language Rights." Suzanne Zwarun. *Chatelaine*, January 1989 (pages 52 and 55).

[2] The earliest public immersion program on record was begun in 1958 in the English-language West Island School Commission in Quebec, with a class of 18 students. The private Toronto French School began its immersion program in 1962.

[3] 1993/94 school year.

[4] Moving families can obtain information from *The Immersion Registry*, an annual listing of schools throughout the country which offer French immersion programs. It is published by Canadian Parents for French (see page 133).

[5] "Immersion: why it works and what it has taught us." *Language and Society* 12, winter 1984 (page 61).

[6] *Learning Through Two Languages* (page 9).

[7] *Foreign Language Immersion: An Introduction* (pages 30-34).

[8] "Learning Second Languages: Suzuki Violin and French Immersion, a Functional Perspective." James D. Benson and William S. Greaves, Applied Linguistics Research Working Group, Glendon College, York University, Toronto. *CONTACT* 2(2), May 1983 (page 15).

[9] At the time of publication one school board, the Calgary School District #19, offered late immersion beginning in grade 7.

[10] Alberta school boards are required by the province to introduce English language arts by grade 3.

[11] "The Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion." Sandra Weber and Claudette Tardif. *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* (page 57).

[12] Ibid. (page 56).

[13] From a series of articles on the brain by Ronald Kotulak of the *Chicago Tribune*. This section is from "Sounds of Silence," which appeared in the May 15, 1993, edition of the *Calgary Herald*.

[14] "The idea is to get children to DO science." Bernard Laplante, Assistant Professor, Department of Curriculum Studies, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. *CPF National Newsletter* 52, winter 1990 (page 6).

[15] "Information Note." Canadian Education Association, August 1992.

[16] See, for example, "Senior Students and French - How Do They Rate Themselves?" W. Russ McGillivray. *More French, s'il vous plaît!*

[17] "How 'Bilingual' Are Immersion Students?" *CPF National Newsletter* 28, December 1984 (page 5).

[18] "Research update." *Language and Society* 12, winter 1984 (page 50).

[19] "Three Basic Questions about French Immersion: Research Findings." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* (page 71).

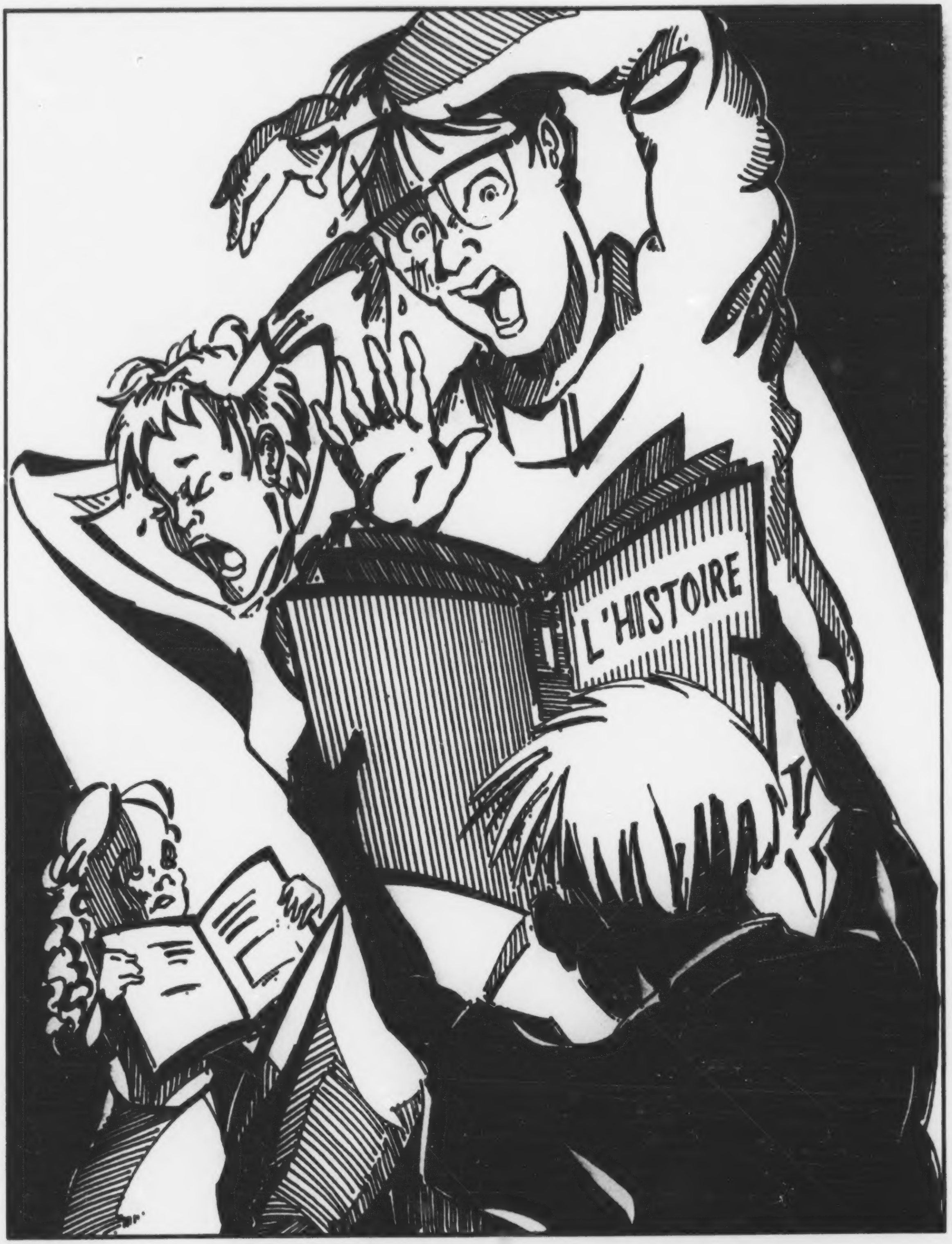
[20] "Early French Immersion and Proficiency in English: Some Long-range Effects." Gerald Neufeld, Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Ottawa. *Language and Society* 43, summer 1993 (page 10).

[21] "Language of Testing Study Report. Student Evaluation Branch, Alberta Education. May 1992 (page 16). This study looked at English language arts test scores for 1986, 1988, 1989 and 1990. Achievement tests since then have shown the same results.

[22] "Research Findings from French Immersion Programs Across Canada: A Parent's Guide" (page 3).

[23] Because participation in the French immersion program is voluntary, there are no controls to ensure that the group of students writing the French version of an achievement test and the group writing the English version are equivalent—that is, to ensure that the only difference between them is the language of instruction.

[24] "The Young Child's View of Starting French Immersion." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* (page 55).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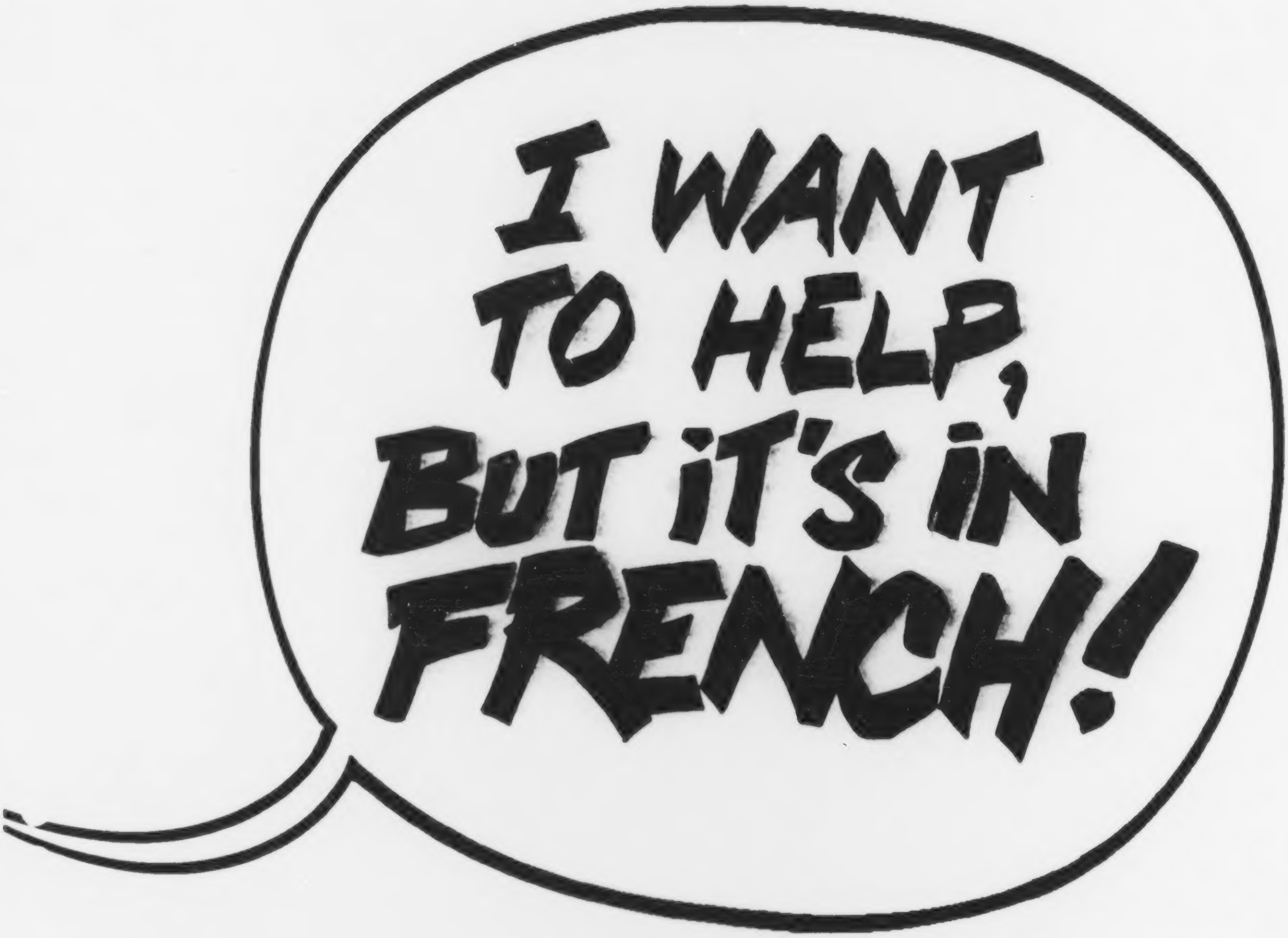
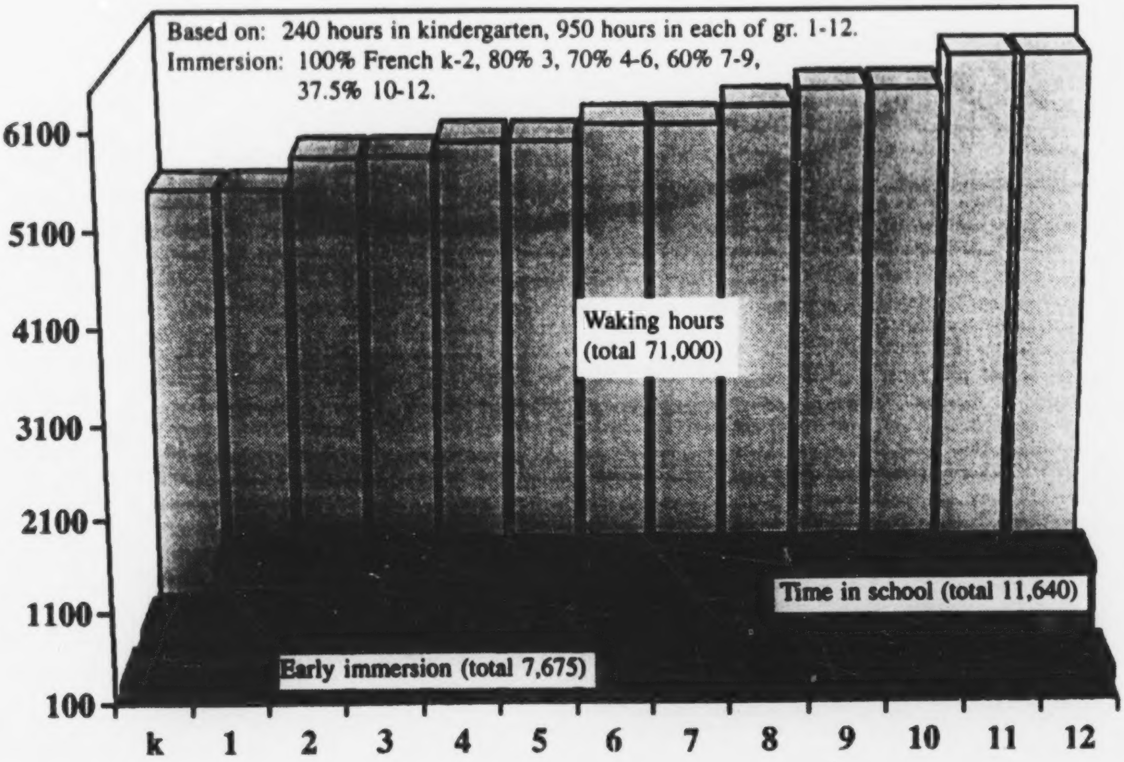

I WANT TO HELP, BUT IT'S IN FRENCH!

Can't the school do it all?

Your child began learning the day she was born, and you were her first teacher. Your responsibility doesn't end on her first day of school! What she does at home and in the community will continue to be a vital part of her learning.

There are only five hours in a school day, fewer than 200 school days in a year. Less than 1,000 hours are available each year to teach the curriculum. There simply isn't enough time for teachers to expose students to the vast range of information, ideas and experiences which are essential to their intellectual, physical and emotional development. Success in school is strongly influenced by activities in the home and community which stimulate a child's imagination and intellect, enhance self-esteem, teach good work habits, and provide motivation to learn and succeed as well as a good foundation for academic learning.



Based on: 240 hours in kindergarten, 950 hours in each of gr. 1-12.
Immersion: 100% French k-2, 80% 3, 70% 4-6, 60% 7-9, 37.5% 10-12.

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In her book, *Help! School Starts in September,* Joan Craven suggests, "Think about your child's learning as a solid brick wall. You, the parent, are the mason who wants to lay a firm foundation, brick by brick. Every new experience is one more brick."

The quality of these experiences needn't depend on how much money you have, your education or occupation, or having lots of free time. Often, the things you do with your child every day, just as a matter of family routine, are the most important. For example:

- having a young child help you load the dishwasher or set the table can be a lesson in organization and order; counting the forks could help with math;
- cooking or gardening together can spark curiosity about scientific principles (why the yeast makes the bread rise or how a plant grows from a seed);
- encouraging creativity can be as simple as keeping a supply of paints, paper, glue and fabric scraps within easy reach, or keeping the cardboard box from the new fridge for budding architects and carpenters to turn into a house, garage or puppet theatre;
- at any age, watching a TV program together and then discussing it can help to develop analytical and debating skills;
- playing games of all kinds, at all ages (Perfection, dominoes, Clue, Scrabble, Monopoly) can develop hand-eye coordination, observation and reasoning skills, memory. vocabulary, spelling, and math skills;
- while a trip to the zoo or museum is obviously a wonderful educational opportunity, your child can learn as much during a shopping trip (Where do oranges grow? Why is a lot of sugar or salt unhealthy? If 100 g costs 20¢, how much would 200 g cost?);
- belonging to a sports team or club can develop cooperation and leadership skills;
- a summer vacation is a chance to learn about geography, history, and how to read a map; and
- doing chores teaches responsibility and self-discipline.

> ***In one family, the parents make a special date with their children every "full moon night." On this special evening, no matter what the weather, they venture out into the countryside to explore. They study the patterns of the stars, watch the northern lights, and hold moonlit fishing derbies and treasure hunts. Their children have learned about the calendar, planning ahead, the cycles of the moon, the seasons, and much more. Their imaginations have been kindled, and they are anxious to augment their experiences by looking up facts in books. They have an array of experiences to draw on when it comes time to write or tell a story at school. They all have great fun together, too!***

It's also important for your child to have many opportunities to experience language at home. She needs to practice expressing her thoughts, ideas and feelings. Sharing your thoughts by "thinking aloud" as you go about routine tasks helps develop her listening skills as well as exposing her to new ideas and information. Good development of oral and listening skills in her first language is particularly important for a young French immersion student who will be relying on these as a foundation for learning her second language.

If you think about your daily routine and family activities, you'll soon realize just how much you already do to help build that solid foundation for your child's learning. Keep up the good work as she grows!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, chapters 4-7.

The Basics of Success: How to Give your Child an Edge in School, chapters 2-7.

HOW do I prepare my child for immersion?

The best advice we can give when enrolling your child in an early French immersion program is to prepare him for school just as you would if he were entering the English stream, from ensuring that he can manage his own jacket and shoes to making him comfortable spending time away from you. Anything you can do to familiarize him with the school, the playground, the teacher (if possible during the spring), future classmates (if you don't know any of the other parents, you should meet them at a spring information/orientation meeting), the route to and from school, and the routine he'll follow in the fall will make the transition that much smoother.

Most, if not all, of the children in his class will have no prior knowledge of French, so don't feel it's necessary to put him in a French preschool or daycare. On the other hand, it's a good idea to expose him to a little French beforehand so that he can enjoy some familiarity with the sound of the language: a French cartoon on the TV, a segment of Sesame Street, a bit of French music on a children's tape or compact disc.

Be positive and casual in your discussions about school: this isn't a really big deal, but a normal event for a child his age. Make too much of going to an immersion program and he may be surprised to arrive at an ordinary school!

Finally, do keep in mind that chronological age and developmental age are not the same. Children don't all reach the level of maturity necessary to handle the demands of school in September of the year in which they turn five. A child who's not yet ready to learn will do no better in French immersion than he would in an English kindergarten. If you're in doubt, consult with an experienced kindergarten teacher and consider waiting. One teacher says, "I always recommend that children be put into grade 1 at the latest possible date. It's always easier to be the oldest and most mature than the youngest and least developed. Even a very bright child can be kept interested and busy with enough effort, and without an early entry into school."[1]

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 11-28.

The Basics of Success: How to Give your Child an Edge in School, especially pages 5-47.

What about homework?

Homework—whether in the English stream or a French immersion program—has three main purposes: to finish work not completed in school; to provide extra time on task; to help students develop independent work and study skills. An elementary immersion student is not expected to have significantly more homework than other students at the same grade level. A secondary immersion student should compare her homework load to that of others taking the same number of course credits.

Early in the school year, you should learn from your child's teacher approximately how much homework to expect. Of course, there will be variations from night to night, but if your child is consistently spending far more or far less time than expected, you should discuss this with the teacher. Your child might not be understanding the work or managing time effectively. Or she might be putting far more into the assignments than required. It's also always important to advise the teacher if something has kept your child from completing the previous night's homework.

How can I encourage good study habits?

Good study or work habits involve the ability to organize and use space and time to the best advantage—some of us seem to develop them naturally, but most must be taught! Regardless of the language in which your child is learning, you can help him develop habits which will be vital to his success both now and throughout his life.

The following tips will help get you started. Remember that it takes time and patience to develop good habits, but they are easier to establish when a child is young.

A place to study

It's a good idea to decide together on a place to study. A desk and chair in a quiet corner of your home might seem like an ideal setting to you, but your child might prefer to work at the kitchen table. Some children like the independence of their own rooms; others work best near their parents and family activity. Take into consideration his needs with regard to light, heat, background noise and posture (see "What about different learning styles?" on page 54). Whatever works best for him, it's a good idea to have one place in the house where your child regularly does his school work.

A time for study

Your child will need a consistent block of time for study. It doesn't have to be the same time each day if you have to work around piano lessons and soccer practice, but it's best to plan the time in advance. Some children work best right after school; others need a break and prefer to wait until after supper. If your child is in an after-school care program, you may want to suggest that he do at least some of his work there, if the atmosphere is conducive, so that his evenings are less hectic.

Involve your child in the process of deciding when homework is to be done. Young children have not yet developed a good sense of time, and usually are not able to consider individual activities within the context of the rest of their lives. Draw a grid with the days of the week across the top and the times down the left side in half-hour increments from the time he gets up until he goes to bed. Fill in the squares together: you'll get a picture of his life which makes it much easier to understand why certain things need to be done at specific times. Mark in school hours, sports and clubs, family activities, favourite TV shows, music lessons, and so on. Then post the schedule in a prominent spot in his room or on the fridge. As he gets older, he can take more and more responsibility for preparing and following his personal schedule.

During his homework time, allow him stretch breaks and treat breaks (the younger he is, the more frequent): even adults find it hard to concentrate for long periods of time. Help him understand how to use these breaks to "reward" himself for completing a certain portion of his homework.

Keeping track of assignments

Many schools now produce a yearly agenda—a booklet including a calendar of school events for the year, pages to keep track of assignments and marks, etc. A great idea! But many students don't use their agendas well (or at all) possibly because they haven't developed the required organizational skills. Showing your child how to keep track of assignments (and his other activities) early in his school career will stand him in good stead when assignments increase and his social schedule is busier.

A good way to start is to have him use the agenda or choose a small coil notebook with his favourite picture on the cover. Have him take it to school each day and show him how to keep track of the homework the teacher assigns and the date it's due. When he comes home, take an interest in his notebook, talk over his assignments and their due dates, help him plan a schedule for getting them done, and discuss what other activities should be noted (club meetings, sports schedules, birthdays, and so on). As he receives larger assignments, teach him how to break them down into sections to be dealt with one at a time, so that they don't seem so overwhelming. Not only will he be more likely to use his agenda effectively, but you will have taught him valuable planning and time management skills which he can use throughout his life.

Supplies

A hunt for a sharp pencil can take up a lot of homework time! Be sure your child has the tools to do the job: pens, pencils, erasers, pencil sharpener, scissors, tape, paper clips, stapler, a ruler, highlighter pens, lots of paper (scrap for drafts, good for finished products), and so on. Why not take him to the stationary store and let him pick out what he needs—it's a good opportunity to discuss homework and to encourage him to think for himself. These things can then be kept in a desk drawer or in a basket or box stored where they will be easily accessible during study time. If he needs help understanding the passage of time, put a clock or kitchen timer on his desk.

The homework shelf

Once the work is done, remembering to take it back to school can be a big challenge for some children. One suggestion is to set up a homework shelf (or box) near the door through which he normally leaves. When he comes home from school, he can get into the habit of taking his homework out of his school bag and putting it on the shelf (or he could leave his school bag on the shelf). Now he will be able to find his homework when it's time to do it, and by returning it—as well as library books, notes to the teacher, permission slips, etc.—to the shelf when he's finished, he won't forget to take it to school the next day. You can put his lunch there, too, so you don't have to drop it off at school when you discover it still sitting on the counter after he leaves!

The more you can do to teach your child to be organized, consistent and independent in his study habits, the better the whole family will cope with school!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 13-14.

Parents, Kids, & Schools: Establishing an Academic Success Team in Elementary and High Schools, pages 61-70.

Taming the Homework Monster - How to Make Homework a Positive Experience for Your Child

Teacher & Parents Together, pages 74-86.

The Basics of Success: How to Give Your Child an Edge in School, chapter 8.

What have other immersion parents learned?

Unlike the parents of the first French immersion students, you have the advantage of 30 years of research and experience. Not only have educators made tremendous strides in understanding how to teach second languages, but parents have learned how to foster second-language development and how to cope when their children are being instructed in a language that they (the parents) don't understand.

Watch your ego!

If you dislike having your young child know more than you do, you're a poor candidate for French immersion parenting. Even if you studied French for several years in school, you may soon find her correcting your accent, and within a few months or years, her fluency will exceed yours. Of course, this is wonderful for her self-esteem, but could be bad for yours if you're sensitive to such things.

A different routine

Because so many French immersion students must be bused, some of your child's routines may be different from the ones you experienced during your schooling. For example, immersion schools often organize activities like clubs and intramural sports during the noon hours rather than before or after school. In order for your child to socialize with classmates from other neighbourhoods, you'll probably find yourself planning with other parents for friends to come home with her from time to time, to be picked up by Mom or Dad after supper and a joint homework session. Some schools facilitate this by circulating (with each family's permission) lists of names, addresses, and phone numbers.

The power of authentic communication

Many unilingual parents have come to realize that they have a distinct advantage over the bilingual teacher! The incentive for learning a language—whether it's one's first, second, or tenth—is to be able to communicate, to be able to exchange information. In the classroom, the teacher most often asks about something he already knows, and that the student knows he knows (e.g., in the beginning, the day's weather or the result of 2+2; later, the reasons for the rise of communism or the chemical composition of water). At home you can have "real" conversations. When you ask your child about a story she has just read in French, she knows you're not checking on her or testing her: it's a genuine question. When she has to explain some of her homework to you (a math problem or a scientific principle, for example), she knows she has to organize her thoughts to give a coherent explanation, because you can't just read her textbook instead. This is why some say immersion "helps to build mental muscles"—the students have many opportunities to "exercise" their brains.

Ask the right questions

You too will have to refine your use of language. You may become concerned if your child is unable to answer the question: "What's your book/TV program about?" Just remember that she wouldn't voluntarily be reading or watching something that's totally beyond her! Young children often don't understand this sort of question, and think they're being asked for a translation or a very detailed description. Ask something more specific based on the pictures: "Is it mainly about a boy or a girl?" or "What's that boy's name? Is he the main person in the story?" Or use a bit of reverse psychology: if the story is clearly about a cow, ask if it's about a horse.

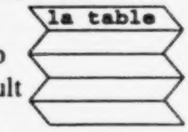
Ask questions that will help her develop the ability to analyze and summarize. Remember those book reports you did in high school: plot, main characters, setting, conflict, resolution, and so on? You can elicit the same information with simple, concrete questions. As she gradually comes to understand these concepts, make your questions more general.

Don't forget your own culture

To become fluent in a second language, one must learn about the people who speak it and their culture (see page 85). For this reason, children in French immersion programs experience far less in-school exposure to English Canadian culture than do the students in the regular English stream. While this is usually a natural part of everyday family life, immersion parents (like minority-language parents) have learned to be more conscious of this aspect of their children's first-language development. By sharing your childhood experiences, reading fairy tales, nursery rhymes, poems and stories, playing games, listening to music, and generally by ensuring that your child is exposed to your own traditions, folklore and stories, you can be confident that she will develop a strong sense of identity with her own culture.

Dealing with *la dictée*

There is one time when your lack of French will be a definite disadvantage: when your child must practice "la dictée" (spelling exercise). Unless your accent is good, she'll find it difficult to have you read out the sentences for her. Many immersion parents have resorted to the use of a tape recorder: have her tape her weekly exercise and then play it back to herself each night. In any case, visual learners (see page 54) will also need to see the words in order to practice them. While it's difficult to write a whole sentence from memory, there are other ways to practice those words which cause the most difficulty. For instance, fold a piece of paper into an accordion, with the folds running horizontally across the page. Write the word or phrase on the top section. Your child can look at it, then fold the word under and try to write it on the second section of paper, and so on.



Mathematics

Math concepts are independent of language. Children need concrete examples and experiences in order to learn about numbers, sorting, classifying, sequencing, time, sizes (length, weight, volume), and so on. For example, it's much easier to understand the concepts of adding, subtracting or multiplying by using toothpicks or poker chips than by just manipulating symbols on a page—and there's no reason not to explore these ideas with your child in English. Immersion students quickly acquire the vocabulary to deal with this subject in both languages (minus is "moins", plus is "plus", equals is "égale" or "font"). Ask your child's grade 1 teacher to give the parents a workshop on teaching mathematics, or suggest it as a topic for a school parents' council meeting.

Story problems ("If Johnny has three apples and Janey has two, then how many ...") challenge many students, and can be even more problematic when written in their second language. Again, immersion parents have an advantage over English-program parents: you can't fall into the trap of giving your child the answer or doing it for her! Help her learn to focus on the exact meaning of each word in the sentence. Teach her how to draw little pictures or diagrams illustrating the problem (a group of three apples and a group of two apples ...). These are skills she must eventually acquire in order to deal with more complex problems, so developing them early will give her a head start.

After a few years...

By the time your child reaches the middle elementary grades, she'll be able to tell you just what she's learning and to receive explanations in English even when the subject matter is taught in French. Although immersion students can't do word-for-word translations (that's a five-year university course), she'll certainly be able to ask you for help with Archimedes' principle or multiplying fractions.

When his daughter had real difficulties with her grade 9 physics unit, one father was able to tutor her despite knowing no French. The daughter would read a short section of the text, not with the objective of learning the concepts but in order to tell her father what it was about. Between her explanation and the diagrams in the text, he was always able to determine which concept was being presented, and then to explain it to her. Her marks rose dramatically. As is the case with peer tutoring, she probably learned a great deal in the process of explaining the material to someone else.

References for projects

Your child may sometimes have to rely on English books when undertaking research for various school projects. This is usually not a problem if English references are only needed to supplement French resources. However, don't forget that all federal government departments and many other government and private agencies publish materials in French—most of which are available for free. For example, Environment Canada might be an excellent source of information for a science project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

"So, You're Worried About Becoming an Immersion Parent." *More French, s'il vous plaît!*

Will my child need French references?

Once your child is settled in school, you'll need to consider some home reference material, as he will require resources in both French and English. Following are a few ideas to get you started with your French collection. We suggest you ask your child's teachers for advice on what will best support his learning needs at each grade level. They might have other suggestions or may be able to recommend some titles. Help and advice can also be sought at the French bookstores listed on page 119, where the clerks are used to assisting immersion parents as well as Francophones. French educational software is also available (see page 130). Canadian Parents for French newsletters often carry the names and addresses of bookstores and publishing houses that fill mail orders, and sometimes order forms and discount offers are included.

Dictionaries

A picture/word dictionary is a great way for kindergarten and grade 1 students to develop vocabulary and word recognition.

A good beginner's French/English dictionary should be illustrated and have print that is easy for the young reader to use. Look for one that provides a context (shows how the word is used in a sentence or phrase) both in English and in French.

A good French dictionary will also be necessary for everyday use. For the elementary grades, look for one that divides words into themes such as numbers, the home, clothing, sports, etc. Some even come with a cassette to help with pronunciation.

Secondary students will find a French dictionary with a small encyclopedia section helpful. Other good features include lists of Latin and foreign expressions, antonyms and definitions categorized according to usage and language level.

You will also want a good, adult level French/English dictionary such as the one you might have used in high school.

Verbs, words, and grammar

By the time your child is in junior high school, you will want to add resource books listing French verbs and their various conjugations as well as spelling and grammar rules. A good book of synonyms will help with writing, just as a thesaurus does for English.

An atlas

For social studies, you will want to include an atlas with geographical and topographical terms as well as place names in French.

Immersion students learn very early the value of a dictionary—usually when a parent helps look up the word for the next day's show-and-tell item!

What about different learning styles?

Over the past few decades, education specialists have come to understand that there are many different learning styles. This awareness has led to profound changes in our schools. No longer do you see (especially at the elementary level) children spending the whole day sitting quietly in neat rows of desks, listening to lectures and doing a lot of pen-and-paper exercises. Teachers now understand that they must use a wide variety of techniques to meet the needs of all of their students.

An understanding of learning styles is also very important for parents. Differences in the way they learn—rather than differences in the language of instruction—often cause confusion when a parent tries to help his child with school work. As a simple example, if you're travelling to a new destination, would you rather use a map or receive directions ("right at the first light, then left at the big church, then...")? Map-users and non-map-users often have difficulty communicating (especially when they're both in the front seat of the same car....). Or have you ever tried to explain something in a way that seemed absolutely clear to you but completely mystified the other person? There are many books which explain learning styles and discuss the best study techniques for different types. The following is only a brief introduction to the topic.

Different people learn better under different conditions. Some need quiet or even complete silence, while others work better when there is some background noise. Some need bright light, others find it irritating. Some need to be in cool rooms, others where it's fairly warm. Some concentrate better sitting up at a desk, others need a more relaxed posture (on a bed or the floor).

Some people tend to be persistent in completing tasks, others have short attention spans or give up easily if a problem is encountered. Some of us need direct supervision, others are more apt to take on themselves the responsibility to complete tasks. Creative people tend to be frustrated with strict guidelines, while others need specific rules and structures. Some are more motivated to learn than others—and all of us are more motivated to learn what interests us than what doesn't. Some are capable of sitting still for long periods of time, while others simply must move about. There are individuals who can skip meals or sleep and easily make up the loss, others must adhere to routines, and still others need to graze and nap. And we're all aware that there are night owls and morning people—it's not true that everyone best learns math if it's presented first thing in the morning!

We all have different perceptual strengths as well. Only about 30% of people learn well what they hear (for example, in lectures). Many have a stronger visual sense, while others need to use their sense of touch, and still others need to experience or use the information before it is learned. For example, if you remember names but forget faces, you're more likely to be an auditory than a visual learner. Do you remember where something is by seeing it in your mind (its location on a page in the newspaper, or on a particular shelf)? Then you're probably a visual learner. Is it difficult for you to learn unless you actually do something with the information; that is, do you find yourself often saying, "let me try"? Then you may be a kinesthetic learner. Of course, we all learn best if more than one sense is involved, but almost everyone has one dominant sense for learning.

In addition to the physical, environmental, social, emotional and sensory factors which affect learning, there are different ways in which we process and react to information. For example, you might have heard of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, a test developed by psychologists Isabel Briggs Myers and Katherine Briggs in 1962. They divided people into sixteen types, according to the way in which they deal with and feel about the world around them. This concept is not only helpful in understanding how people learn, but also in dealing with personal relationships. Different types have different interests, values and problem-solving techniques. One very simple illustration: an "extroverted" person is interested in the outer world of actions, objects, and persons, while an "introvert" is more interested in her inner world of concepts and ideas.

It's also important to remember that young children do not learn in the same way as teenagers and adults. It's generally accepted that around the age of 9 or 10, we become more conscious of our own learning and can deal with increasingly theoretical concepts. For example, a 4-year-old is taught to swim through games and activities designed to help her get the feel of the water against her body. She doesn't think to hold her breath when ducking her head, but learns to do so instinctively. A 12-year-old novice swimmer, on the other hand, will be told specifically how to move her arms and legs and how to hold her head. She'll be conscious of the need to grab her breath before going underwater. (By the way, learning languages is a similar process—think about the way a child learns her mother tongue as compared to the way an adult immigrant learns a new language.)

Finally, don't forget that your child's life experiences are different from your own. For example, your birth order may be different. You may be a youngest child, while she's the oldest. Certainly the world around her is not the same as when you were her age—how many 5 year-olds had seen, much less used, a computer when you were that age?

All this diversity makes life fascinating—but no wonder the old, formal classrooms worked extremely well for some and very poorly for others!

You've probably learned by trial and error (but perhaps not consciously) what works best for you. Understanding your child's strengths and weaknesses will give her a head start—and give you valuable insights into her particular needs and the ways in which they differ from yours.

Where do you start? Find a book on this topic that includes tests or checklists to help you analyze learning styles as well as suggestions for activities and study skills that are suitable for various types of learners. Or if you're one of the many who don't learn easily from books, suggest that your school council bring in a speaker who can explain these concepts. Observe your child and yourself to get a sense of your individual strengths and weaknesses, needs and tendencies. If your child is young, try to initiate games, puzzles and activities that best suit the way she learns. As she grows older, you'll be able to apply this understanding of learning styles when helping with her homework—whether answering her questions, explaining concepts, or showing her how to study.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Growing Up Learning: The Key to Your Child's Potential.

People Types & Tiger Stripes: A Practical Guide to Learning Styles.

Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles: A Practical Approach.

How can I get the most from parent-teacher conferences?

Most parents with children in school will tell you that the time set aside for each report card conference is very limited (after all, 30 students at 15 minutes each means 7½ hours of a teacher's time). It's important for both parents and teachers to prepare carefully in order to make these meetings effective.

Immersion parent-teacher conferences can be even more challenging. Compared to the English stream, a larger proportion of parents tend to take part, and they usually have extra questions to do with the French part of the program—there's never any time to spare! This makes it even more essential to do your own "homework" in advance of the meeting. Here are some suggestions:

- Read over the report card carefully and compare it to previous reports.
- Talk to your child. Let him know that the conference is an opportunity for you and the teacher to discuss how to work together to help him become a successful learner—it's not a "tattle tale" session. Find out what he likes or dislikes about school, what he believes are his problems and successes, how he feels about his learning.
- Think about what you want to learn from the meeting. Write down a list of your questions and comments: don't rely on your memory! (If your list is very long, you may want to send it to the teacher in advance of the meeting.) Be prepared to give specific examples, especially if you wish to raise a particular concern. Leave a space after each question in which to jot notes of the teacher's answers.
- Time is precious: don't waste it on small talk.
- Remember that you and the teacher need not focus only on marks. This is an opportunity to share information and insights into other aspects of your child's life which can influence his learning. Here are just a few examples of topics which might arise:

From parents: What is meant by ____? How much homework is expected? What testing methods are used? Have there been any incidents at school involving my child? Does he have good work habits? Are there any missing homework assignments? What do you see as his strengths and weaknesses? How well does he work with the other students? Did you know he is especially interested in ____ / really seems to dislike ____? You should be aware that our family ____ / my son recently ____. Is extra help available? What can I do at home to support his learning?

From the teacher: What is his attitude toward school? Are there any physical or emotional problems we should know about? Does he have any particular interests or skills? Have you considered doing ____ to support his learning?

- Don't be intimidated by jargon: always ask for an explanation of any confusing word or term.
- Whenever you're not sure what the teacher means, ask questions or restate the comment. For example, if told your child is often last to finish a math assignment, you might say, "So, he's having more difficulty than the other students in math." You might be told that he's daydreaming, or going to too much trouble to print the numbers very neatly. Don't be afraid to ask for specific examples.
- If told your child is experiencing a problem, don't take it personally. Ask the teacher questions for more clarification to get to the possible cause. Compare her perceptions with yours or with those of his other teachers, exploring possible reasons for any differences.
- If there's not enough time to discuss everything that you think is important, make another appointment with the teacher. So that you can both be prepared, take a minute to develop a list of the topics to be explored further—or do so via a follow-up note or telephone call.
- Go over your notes as soon as you get home. Tidy them up to ensure that you'll still understand them a few days or a few months later, then file them for future reference. If something still isn't clear or you think of another question, follow up with a note or call to the teacher.
- Discuss the conference with your child, or, if he attended with you, have a follow-up conversation about what was covered. Talk about both his strong and weak points in school. If he needs help, talk about what will be done to provide this assistance, or what you can do together.

Some schools now involve students in these meetings. In one example, small groups of students receive their parents in their classroom to show their work and discuss their progress. For a period of 30-60 minutes, the students and parents work through prepared activities while the teacher moves around the room, spending about 15 minutes with each family. This type of conferencing answers many needs. Students take ownership of their learning. They become aware of the importance of work goals and develop responsibility and leadership skills. Parents hear directly from their children about learning objectives and see samples of work at the place where it is done. However, don't hesitate to request a private meeting with the teacher if there is more you want to discuss.

Misunderstandings can occur between two people who speak the same language. Careful listening is even more important when one or both of the participants is using his second language. If the teacher's English is weak, or if you're not comfortable in either French or English, take this into consideration. Check that you have understood by restating a comment in your own words. Ask for specific examples to help clarify a point, or give specific examples if you believe the teacher is not understanding you completely. If an in-depth conference is needed because your child is experiencing some difficulties, consider asking that a bilingual principal or resource teacher take part to assist with nuances of meaning.

Finally, remember that teachers are human too! Some get even more nervous about these meetings than certain parents. They're also no more perfect than you; they, too, can make mistakes. Always remember that your objective is for you and the teacher to become partners in supporting your child's education.

> ***One teacher always tells parents, "I promise to believe only half of what the children tell me about their families if you'll promise to believe only half of what they say about me!"***

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 118-120.

Parents, Kids, and Schools: Establishing an Academic Success Team in Elementary and High Schools, pages 23-34.

How can I keep in touch with the school?

Fifteen minutes during three or four report card conferences a year is far from enough time to establish good links between home and school. Ongoing communication is important if parents and teachers are to form an effective team. There are so many ways to make this happen we decided to present them in alphabetical order:

First, a general comment

Help the teacher understand your needs. A bilingual French immersion teacher (who might not have children of his own) can't always be "in tune" with a unilingual parent's perceptions of the program. You can assist the teacher and the other parents by helping him to understand any concerns, feelings of helplessness, or sense of being "out of touch" that you're experiencing.

Class meetings

A teacher, especially at the kindergarten and grade 1 levels, might invite parents to a special class meeting early in the school year. A school-wide meet-the-teacher night often doesn't provide enough time to introduce parents to the teacher's plans, teaching methods and requests for volunteer assistance. Because the concept of immersion is so new to them, parents particularly appreciate this kind of session; however, a young teacher might feel uncomfortable speaking to a group of adults, especially if his English is weak. If this is the case, why not suggest that a more experienced teacher or bilingual principal help him out? You could also assist by suggesting some of the topics he might cover—help him to see things from the unilingual parent's perspective.

> ***There have been very effective meetings where for the first few minutes the teacher treated the parents as students, speaking to them only in French. When the parents found that they could understand what the teacher was saying—through body language, pantomiming, pointing to visual aids, and so on—they began to feel much more comfortable about their children's experiences.***

Class newssheets

Especially during the first few years of school, many teachers keep parents apprised of their plans for the coming period. On a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis, their newssheets include information such as: themes for the upcoming period (the weather, my family, etc.), the major activities the children will be doing, word lists or mathematical functions to be covered, and requests for assistance (e.g., materials needed from home for craft projects).

Home/school notebook

When there is a need for ongoing home/school communication, perhaps because your child is experiencing a difficulty of some sort, a little notebook that is used by you and the teacher on a daily basis can be of real benefit. Each day the teacher jots down his notes to you: homework assignments to be done, observations of your child's work and/or behaviour (good as well as bad!), and so on. That evening you review his notes, adding your own messages and comments for him to read the next morning.

Meet-the-teacher night

Many schools hold such a session early in the school year. It's often a chance for your child to introduce you to her teacher and show you her classroom, desk and samples of her work. Sometimes the parents sit in their children's desks to hear a brief overview from the teacher of his plans for the year, then go on to the gym or theatre to hear from the principal. At the secondary level, you might follow your child's normal daily schedule, moving from room to room for 10-minute "classes." Whatever the format, it's an excellent opportunity to begin your acquaintance with the school, staff and even some other parents. You'll also pick up key pieces of information, like how much homework to expect, school and class rules, and so on.

Newsletters

It's sometimes difficult to keep on top of all the mail we receive, but paying attention to school newsletters is a good way to keep informed. Mark important dates on your calendar right away, and file the newsletters for future reference instead of throwing them away.

Experienced parents will tell you about the interesting effects of a mouldy old banana on a school newsletter: be sure to check your young child's school bag each night! Older students need to be reminded from time to time that these papers are important to you, and must be delivered promptly.

Open house

These events are often held during Education Week, in the spring during registration, or to culminate a school-wide theme. They're a chance for children to "show off" their accomplishments not only to parents but also to siblings and grandparents—and for you to once again be "in touch" with your child's education.

Parent questionnaires

Early each year, your school might ask you to fill in a questionnaire designed to give the teacher some background information on your child: family make-up, any health or emotional issues, her interests, sports, and hobbies, special likes and dislikes, and so on. This isn't designed to pry or interfere, but to help the teacher see your child as a whole person, build on her strengths, and be aware of any areas of concern.

School councils

The Alberta School Act requires schools to establish school councils. These bodies provide parents with the opportunity to have a real say into school goals, priorities and policies—decisions which can directly affect your child's education. Not taking part means leaving such decisions to others. School councils may also host information meetings or workshops for their member parents, with guest speakers on a variety of relevant topics.

School handbook

This is a booklet giving information on your school's policies, procedures and objectives. It might also include an introduction to different programs within the school, counselling services, clubs or special activities for students, noon hour and after-school activities. At the secondary level, this sort of information is often included in a student agenda or handbook which you should borrow from your child to review.

Telephone

Ensure that the school office always has your current home and (if applicable) work phone numbers. Early in the year, send a note to the teacher giving the same information and best times to reach you. Let him know that you welcome his calls or notes. Don't forget that it's hard to reach teachers during class hours, so if you call, expect to leave a message giving the times when you can be reached.

Volunteering

Parents whose French is weak (or nonexistent) may not be able to do much within the classroom, but there are always materials to prepare, books to shelve, copies to make and collate, phoning to do, transportation and extra supervision for field trips to provide, hot dog day money to collect and count, a book fair to organize, families new to the school to orient. As a volunteer, you'll learn more about the ways in which your child is being taught and get to know the teacher and other school staff better. You'll also free the staff to spend more time focusing on the students.

Those whose French is good enough are often invited to speak on their careers, hobbies or other areas of expertise, or just to listen to the children read.

If you can't get to the school during the day, let the teacher know that you're willing to do things at home (bake cookies, make posters, edit a newsletter, telephone other volunteers, make arrangements for a field trip). Your child will be proud of your contribution to her class and see that you think school is important. You'll have more contact with the teacher (if only by note or telephone) and gain insights into school activities.

Let the teacher know what time, energy, talents and areas of interest you have to offer. Consider volunteering for your school council, either as an executive or committee member, or assisting with a particular project. Remember that a little bit of expertise can be just as valuable as a lot of time!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 111-118.

"Is There a Problem with Your Child's Education? Here's What To Do." Alberta Teachers' Association (pamphlet).

"Parent Volunteers." Alberta Teachers' Association (pamphlet).

Parents, Kids, and Schools: Establishing an Academic Success Team in Elementary and High Schools, pages 34-40.

Teachers & Parents Together, pages 19-44.

Your school board's policies regarding school councils and your own school council's bylaws, terms of reference, or other guidelines.

Footnotes

[1] "So, Johnny's Report Wasn't Wonderful!" Mary Jane Cioni. *CPF National Newsletter 30,* June 1985 (page 4).

Lire et écrire

READING
AND
WRITING

Reading: the most fundamental skill

Laying the foundation

The most important foundation for reading is established long before your child goes to school. Educators insist there is nothing more important that you can do for him than to establish a love of books and an appreciation of the written word.

Read to him often, and let him see you reading and using books frequently. Expose him to a variety of literature:

- books with repetitive words and phrases that he'll begin to "read" along with you;
- stories and poems about everyday experiences which you can then discuss in relation to his own life;
- books that help explain events in his life;
- books that expand his knowledge;
- stories and poems that take him into another, interesting world;
- material that's just plain fun, like riddles and silly rhymes; and,
- **especially important** for an early immersion student, books that expose him to his own culture.

Don't wait until your child is reading to take him to the library. A 3-year-old can attend story time and browse with you; later you can teach him where to find the books he wants and how to sign them out.

Discuss stories with your child. Encourage him to become an active rather than a passive listener.

- Ask for his opinion of something you've just read to him. Did he like it? Why or why not? Then talk about your own reactions to the story.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Stop at some point in the story and ask him what he thinks might come next. (When he's older, you might occasionally have fun together making up alternative endings.)
- Talk about any words he doesn't understand. (Reread the sentence or passage, study the picture together, then encourage him to guess the meaning.)
- Ask him whether the story is fact or fiction, then have him explain his answer.
- Relate the story to personal experience, either his or your own.
- If he's interested, encourage him to tell you parts of familiar stories.
- Encourage him to retell stories to someone else in your house—or even to his stuffed toys.

Use books and other written materials together. Look up something of current interest (How did Hallowe'en get started? How do we care for our new puppy? What should we see on our holidays? How might we decorate a birthday cake?) in a reference book and let him look at the pictures while you read the section or instructions out loud.

Don't stop reading to your child once he can read. Continue to read aloud as long as he'll let you. Take the opportunity to expose him to literature that's a bit beyond his own ability. It's also an opportunity to share some time together, and to show that books can be as entertaining as games and television.

When do children learn to read?

"Some time between the ages of five and seven most children:

- learn to recognize what many words say,
- make useful connections between sounds and letters,
- realize that words on the page fit together to make meaning,
- begin to read stories and books.

These are the traditional signs of 'starting to read'. Learning to become a more competent reader continues on through the elementary school years, and beyond."[1]

By grade 6, you can't tell which children began reading at the age of 5 and which didn't begin until they were 7. What's important is that your child is exposed to appropriate opportunities and is encouraged to read, and that he doesn't become frustrated and turned off by being pushed too soon.

Some grade 1 immersion teachers focus at the beginning of the year on developing the students' knowledge of French, while continuing with pre-reading activities. They proceed more slowly with reading instruction than their English-program counterparts. This is to ensure that the students will be able to make sense of what they read. Just as reading in one's mother tongue depends on the ability to understand and to use that language orally, so must immersion students first develop a basic knowledge of French. In the long run, this minor delay makes no difference to the students' achievement—indeed, the more ready a child is to learn, the more quickly he'll progress.

Just as it's unfair to compare when two children first walked or talked, it's unfair to compare when they first read a word or sentence. You should be watching not for a magic age but for reasonable progress (see "What are the early warning signs?" on page 101). If your child has a tendency to compare himself with his siblings or friends, help him to focus instead on comparing how he's doing today with how he did yesterday or last week.

Remember that not every teacher introduces the same concepts at exactly the same time; nor will a teacher follow exactly the same schedule with each class. She must constantly be evaluating her current students' needs and readiness to learn.

In the meantime, explain to the other adults in your child's life that he is in an early immersion program and first learning to read in French. Grandparents, cub and brownie leaders, Sunday school teachers and others who might expect him to read English materials should be asked to avoid putting him in a potentially embarrassing situation (just as they would a child who is experiencing a delay in reading due to a learning difficulty). At the same time, share with them your confidence that within a couple of years, your child will be reading in two languages (and eligible for a cub's or brownie's "translator" badge).

But I wasn't taught that way!

If you were taught to read only by sounding out the letters (phonics), you may be confused by the way your child is taught to read. It's now recognized that people employ a variety of strategies to make sense of all those squiggles on the page, and that different people find different strategies work better for them. For this reason, children are taught several clues for identifying words, including:

- recognizing by sight words that are seen often;
- using clues provided by such things as the length or shape of a word, the beginning letters, illustrations, or the meaning of a passage to predict what the word might be;
- looking for "root words" or familiar word parts (endings, rhyming parts, etc.) to assist in figuring out an unknown word;
- sometimes skipping over an unknown word, continuing on reading, and using the meaning from the rest of the sentence to help identify the unfamiliar word.[2]

This does not mean that phonics clues are ignored. Your child needs to learn how to use the sounds of the letters to figure out new words. It means that phonics is not the only word-recognition strategy taught. It also means that from the beginning, emphasis is placed not just on sounding out words but also on understanding what is read.

As you watch your child read in French...

Here are the differences between French and English pronunciation that might be most obvious to you as you follow along with your child's reading:

- while there are significant differences between the sounds of the vowels in the two languages, the consonants are essentially the same
- h is always silent in French;
- an s at the end of a word to indicate the plural is silent;
- qu sounds like k (not like kw as in quick);
- th is pronounced t;
- ch is pronounced like the English sh;
- i is pronounced like the long English e (bee);
- y sounds like yes even at the end of a word;
- ou in French always sounds like group (not out);
- oy and oi sound like the wa in water;
- au and eau have the long o sound (so);
- ez has the long a sound (hay);
- accents change the sounds of vowels: e sounds much like the short English e (heck) while é has the long a sound (hay);
- stress falls on the last sounded syllable (ami sounds like am-**ee**);
- when a word begins with a vowel (or a silent h), it is usually joined with the last consonant of the preceding word—it will sound as though your child is reading one word instead of two.

Should you teach your child to read in English?

It's not necessary to provide formal reading lessons at home. You could confuse your child if your approach is different from the teacher's. Also, if he hasn't mastered French phonics, he may not be ready to learn the sounds of the letters in another language (English). Formal home lessons also lengthen the school day, and change your role and relationship with your child from that of parent to that of teacher.

You should, however, encourage any attempts he makes to read in English by answering his questions and praising his efforts. You can have some interesting discussions comparing and contrasting the two languages[3] (or three, if another is spoken in your home). The incentive to read English is extremely strong, so he'll try when he's ready.

In the meantime, you can make a very significant contribution to the process of teaching him to read by playing a variety of listening and word games. The ability to identify similarities and differences between sounds and the sequence of sounds within a word is fundamental to both reading and spelling. This ability is independent of the language used; it's not the name of a letter but the sound that's important. For example, whether you call the second letter of the alphabet **bee** (English) or **bay** (French), your child needs to recognize the **b** sound wherever it occurs in a word (**but**, tu**b**, ru**bb**er). He also must be able to differentiate it from similar sounds (**but/putt**, **boo/do**). There are many activities that you can do with your child during reading time at home, while riding in the car, and in various stolen moments (in waiting rooms and line-ups, while preparing supper) to develop such important pre-literacy skills. Games like I Spy (something that begins with ssss), thinking of rhyming words, and making up sentences with the same initial sound for every word can combine real fun with serious learning.[4]

It's also very important to continue to read to your child each day, and to discuss and enjoy these stories together. Run your finger along the sentences as you read them, so that he can follow with his eyes and begin to recognize some words. As he begins to express an interest in tackling English, try reading aloud in unison. Sit side by side with a book of his choosing. Match your reading speed and the volume of your voice with his as you read along together (it'll take a little practice). Have a prearranged signal for him to let you know when he wants to try a passage on his own, then wants you to join in with him again. As he develops confidence with simple books, use this technique with more challenging materials that are too difficult for him to read on his own.[5]

The transition to reading in English

The motivation for children to read the language with which they are surrounded is very high. Many children in French immersion will, once they've developed some confidence with reading in French, attempt to decipher high-interest English words without any prompting from a teacher or parent. They usually apply French sounds, but often, because of the context and their familiarity with English, they're quickly able to determine the correct pronunciation ("Nintendo" would sound much like neen-ten-**do** in French).

Both French and English are read from left to right, both use groups of letters to form words (rather than symbols, as in Chinese) and groups of words to form sentences, and both use the same alphabet. All of this makes it relatively easy for children to transfer the skill of reading from French to English.

When English language arts is introduced, the teacher helps the children to build on what they already know about reading and to gain confidence in their ability to read in English. She guides them through the process of sorting out the differences between the two languages that "interfere" with this transfer. What she does not have to do is start from scratch. Indeed she can capitalize on the students' previous experiences, both as learners and as language users. As explained on page 32, studies clearly and consistently show that within two years, the French immersion students are working at the same level as their peers in the English program.

For those students who are already reading in English, the teacher's task is to encourage and challenge them to progress. This might include using them as peer support in cooperative learning situations.

What can you do? First, try to reduce any anxiety your child might be feeling. Express confidence that he **will** read in English and, if necessary, reassure him that some confusion between the two languages is perfectly natural—and will soon pass (after all, within a few months he'll be able to read in two languages, while you know only one).

Appreciate his beginning attempts at reading in English and remark on his progress. Don't discourage him by being critical of mistakes, but rather make him comfortable with taking risks.

If your child is encountering difficulties that continue to cause frustration, do speak with his teacher. For more information, see page 100.

Above all, continue to read to your child and let him see reading as an everyday occurrence.

Too busy with supper preparations to read a school notice to his grade 2 daughther whose curiosity was getting the better of her, an acquaintance tells of whispering in her ear, "You know, reading English is the same as reading French." She took the memo aside, spent some time mumbling and muttering to herself, and then proceeded to give him the message!

Here are a few of the differences between the two languages (in addition to those mentioned on page 66) that the "transition year" English language arts teacher will help your child sort out:

- the sound of the letter h must be introduced, as it is not pronounced in French (don't be surprised if at first your child sounds hand as and);
- because w and x are rarely used in French, their sounds must be introduced;
- additional sounds for the letter y must be introduced;
- the sound of qu as in quick must be introduced, as well as the sound of th;
- there are several differences between the sounds of the vowels;
- because a silent e at the end of French words often does not affect the pronunciation of the word, the concept of such an ending e changing a vowel from a short to a long sound must be explained (e.g., tap, tape)
- the use of the letter r after a vowel in French does not alter the sound significantly, so English words such as bird, for, and church will have to be emphasized; also, in English the sound of an a is changed in combinations such as al and aw.

Encourage reading in French

By grade 4 or 5, you'll wonder why you ever worried about reading in English! By that time immersion students are more likely to do their leisure reading in English rather than in French.[6] Because reading is so fundamental to the development of language skills (vocabulary, grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.), this is a worrying tendency. Graduates of the program

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explain that even as early as grade 4, it's easier to read in English, as the students' recognition vocabulary is so much greater in their first language. Unfortunately, this is a downward spiral. The less exposure to French, the more slowly their vocabularies grow, and the more tedious it is to read in that language. Teachers do what they can to promote independent reading in French by providing incentives, time to read in class, and access to appropriate and interesting books and other print materials. Here are a few ways you can encourage reading in French:

- encourage reading: even if a small proportion of his reading is in French, a confident and active reader will get much more exposure to his second language than a child who reads little;
- find books on subjects in which he is especially interested, even if these are translations of English books rather than original French literature (don't forget nonfiction, such as books on a hobby, game or scientific topic);
- look for materials which allow him to get satisfaction from reading a small amount at a time: short stories, magazines, comic books, reference books.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 72-83.

Language Learning for French Immersion Students in the Transition Year: Information for Parents (also the booklets on this topic for school administrators and teachers).

Paired Reading: Positive Reading Practice.

Parents Ask About Language Learning.

Teachers & Parents Together, pages 133-137.

The Basics of Success: How to Give Your Child an Edge in School, chapters 4 and 5.

Many French/English dictionaries include introductions to French grammar and pronunciation.

Writing: a paragraph is a paragraph

It has often been suggested that French immersion students do so well in English language arts (see page 32) because their knowledge of their second language is so good. This allows them to compare and contrast the two systems in detail. These students are conscious of language, and tend to take it less for granted than do their unilingual peers.

Another factor is the duplication of learning. English and French are, after all, very similar languages. Immersion students look at language arts twice, from two different perspectives—we should be surprised if this didn't give them a bit of an advantage!

You might be interested to know:

Abbreviations: In English, an abbreviation always has a period, whereas, in French, the rule varies. In French, a period follows an abbreviation only if the last letter is not included in the abbreviation (e.g., Monsieur becomes M. because the final r is not part of the abbreviation, while Madame becomes Mme without a period, because the final e is included in the abbreviation. In English, we write Mr. with a period despite the fact that the final r of Mister is included).

Capitalization: Only the first word in a title (and, of course, any name of a person or place) is capitalized (e.g., Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada is Société éducative de visites et d'échanges au Canada). The days of the week, months of the year, and names of languages are not capitalized.

Contractions: In English, letters are dropped and replaced by an apostrophe for the sake of brevity (e.g., don't), but this is not done in French. Where an apostrophe is used, it replaces a vowel because two succeeding vowels would make pronunciation difficult (e.g., qui il becomes qu'il).

Gender: In French, all nouns have gender. This means that every noun is preceded by le or un (masculine the, a/an) or la, une (feminine the, a/an). The feminine form of some nouns is indicated by an added final e (ami and amie). In addition, the adjective must agree with the gender of the noun, which means a change to its spelling and sometimes its pronunciation (e.g., le chien brun, la table brune). (An adjective must also agree with the noun in number: les trois chiens bruns.)

Money is written differently (e.g., $1,000.45 would be 1 000,45 $).

Numbers are written differently (e.g., 2,567.13 would be 2 567,13).

Paragraph structure: This is exactly the same in both languages.

Possession: French does not use 's to indicate possession, but instead uses de (of) (e.g., John's book, le livre de Jean).

Punctuation: This is exactly the same, except that you might see the symbols « » instead of " " around quotations.

Sentence structure: This is essentially the same in both languages. You might notice that in French the adjective tends to follow rather than precede the noun (e.g., the brown dogs is les chiens bruns). Questions are formulated in a slightly different fashion (e.g., Do you speak? is Parlez-vous?) and there are other variations. However, in both languages, the concept of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, clauses, etc. is identical.

However, the French word for sentence is phrase (pronounced fraz), so the English language arts teacher must clarify the difference between the terms for a complete sentence and a sentence fragment.

Spelling: There are a few elements in addition to those mentioned on pages 66 and 68 which the English language arts teacher will work to clarify:

- The names of the letters g and j are reversed in the two languages. This can cause confusion in dictations and spelling when a child appears to be using the wrong letter but is actually only confusing the names.
- Likewise, the name of the letter i in French is the same as the name of the letter e in English.
- The letter q can be used alone in French but never in English, where it must be followed by a u.

Verbs: If you studied French, you will remember that the verb system is more complex than that of English; however, the students quickly learn to use a verb reference book. (The good news is that French spelling is far more consistent than English, with our many exceptions to rules and different sounds for the same symbol.)

As with English, one of the keys to developing accuracy in spelling, grammar and punctuation is to be an avid reader and listener. Those who are frequently exposed to good examples of a language develop a sense of what looks and sounds correct.

The other key to correct writing is motivation. The student who really wants to communicate his ideas, thoughts and feelings—who sees it as a personally meaningful activity—will be more inclined to strive for accuracy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Language Learning for French Immersion Students in the Transition Year: Information for Parents (also the booklets on this topic for school administrators and teachers).

Many French/English dictionaries include introductions to French grammar and pronunciation.

Make writing an everyday activity

We all learn best what we want to learn. If writing is of interest to your child, if she really wants to communicate via pen and paper, she'll be motivated to develop the necessary skills. Help her to perceive writing as an interesting, useful and satisfying activity.

Here are some everyday activities which can engage your child in writing:

- helping you prepare your grocery list (if her spelling is still very weak, she can copy names from package labels);
- writing "thank you" notes for birthday and Christmas presents (a few at a time if your child is very young—write yours at the same time. If the recipient may not understand because your child's message is in French, encourage your child to draw a little illustration and/or provide an explanation in your own note);
- making her own greeting cards for special friends and relatives;
- preparing invitations for family get-togethers;
- adding notes to your letters, and later writing to relatives and friends herself;
- helping you put together a family or personal photograph album with written captions for the pictures.

Make writing fun by providing a variety of tools: paper of different sizes and colours, index cards, cardboard from shirts and nylons, cut-up paper bags, stick-on notes, graph paper, pencils, pens with different colours of ink, crayons, pencil crayons, felt markers, paint and brushes, someone's old typewriter, stencils for tracing large letters. Don't forget pencil sharpeners, erasers, pencil grips to make pens and pencils easier to hold (or wrap tape around them), liquid paper. Your child might cut the wanted words out of magazine headlines and paste them into sentences. You're limited only by your imagination—and hers!

If you have access to a computer, consider a simple word processing program (see page 130 for information on French software).

An older child could be given her own envelopes and even stamps. Encourage her to write away for free samples or brochures on topics of interest to her. Support efforts at accuracy by giving her her own dictionary and, later, a thesaurus (see page 53 for more information on references). Consider finding her a pen pal (see page 129).

"Do as I do" is a much more powerful message than "Do as I say."

And here are some ways to encourage writing:

- most important of all, let your child see you writing often, whether it's letters, reminder lists, thank-you notes, letters of complaint, recipes, or work you've brought home from the office;
- write happy little notes to your child and place them on her pillow or in her lunch—she'll come to understand the pleasure that receiving a written communication can bring and she may begin to write some notes to you (also, "clean me" or "pick me up" notes in appropriate spots are a non-confrontational way to nag);
- encourage relatives to write to your child and, especially, to respond to her notes and cards.

Learn about the natural development of a child's writing skills. Your child will begin by experimenting with letters she knows, often using just one or two to represent a word—a good sign that she's beginning to really understand the relationship between those squiggles on the page and the words we speak. At this stage it's quite usual for her to write letters upside down and/or backwards, as a strong sense of direction and order only develop with time. Gradually, she'll try to write more and more the way she hears and sees the words. These temporary and invented spellings are a natural progression towards conventional spelling.

The development of punctuation and grammar skills will follow a similar course. School lessons and frequent reading will move her to greater and greater accuracy as well as complexity of thought. Keep a folder with some samples of her work, noting the date on the back of each item. Looking back from time to time, you should see real signs of progress.

Word games like Scrabble, Spill 'n Spell, crossword puzzles, and word lotto are wonderful ways for children to improve their language skills. However, you may need to delay introducing these in English until after grade 3. If your French is adequate, or your child has other French-speaking children to play with, consider obtaining some French versions. In the meantime, oral word games are a fun way to extend her English vocabulary. And memory games (such as Concentration and other card games) will help to develop her ability to recall and visualize.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 69-72.

Language Learning for French Immersion Students in the Transition Year: Information for Parents (also the booklets on this topic for school administrators and teachers).

Parents Ask About Language Learning.

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Footnotes

[1] *Parents Ask About Language Learning*. Alberta Education (page 2).

[2] Ibid. (page 3).

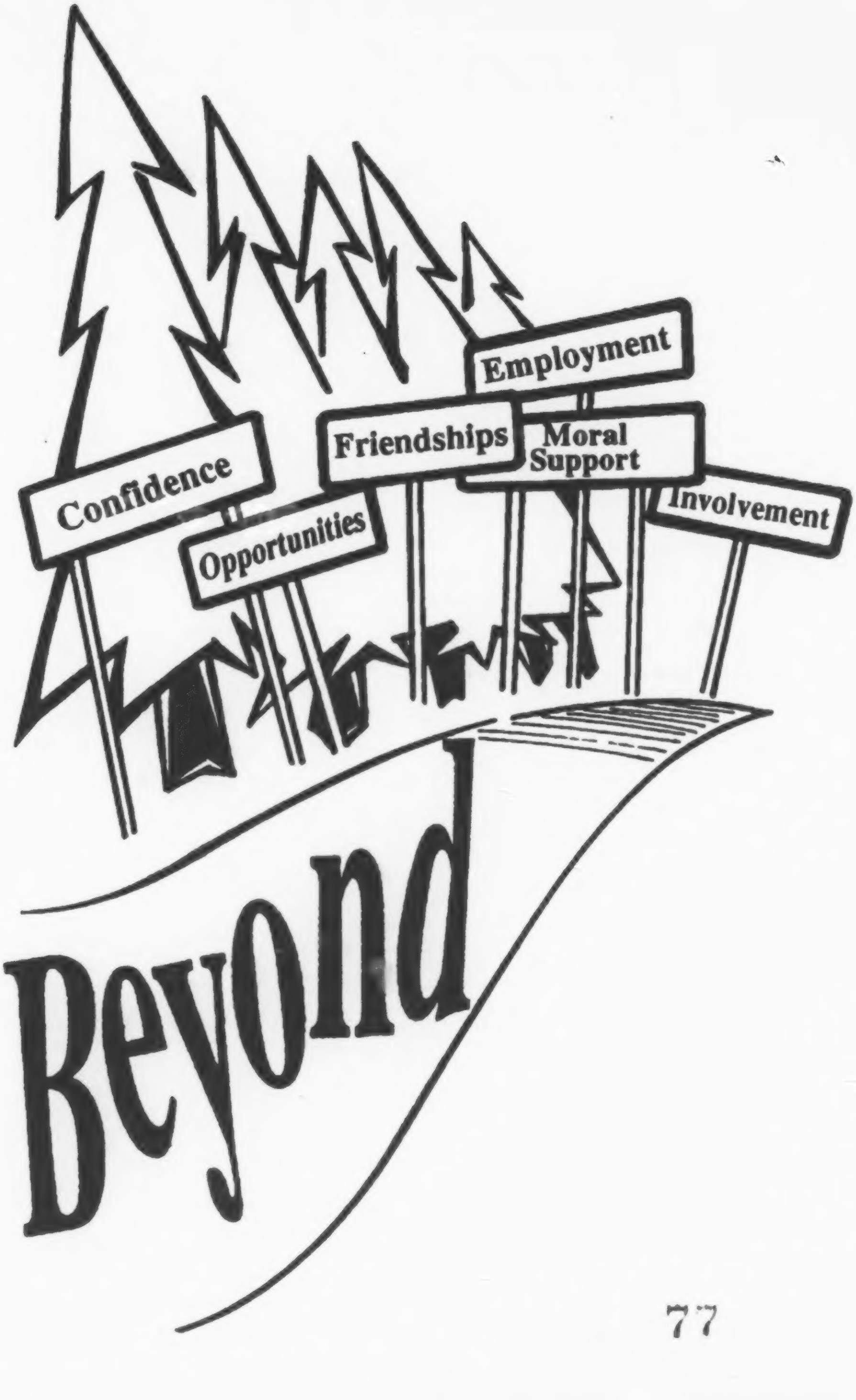
[3] See "As you watch your child read in French" above, "The transition to reading in English" below, and "Writing: a paragraph is a paragraph" on page 70.

[4] Some good examples are given in *The Basics of Success: How to Give Your Child an Edge in School*, pages 59-66.

[5] For more information, see *Paired Reading: Positive Reading Practice.*

[6] For example, in a recent article entitled "Reading for Pleasure in French: A Study of the Reading Habits and Interests of French Immersion Children," the authors report on the voluntary reading patterns of 127 Calgary students in grade 5. Although they had not begun to study English language arts until grade 3, 85% said that they found it easier to read in English than in French. They spent an average of 33 minutes a day reading English books, comics, newspapers, and/or magazines outside of school, but only 4½ minutes reading French books and other materials. - J. Claude Romney, David M. Romney, and Helen M.Menzies. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 51(3), April 1995.

French
English
The Secondary Years
and


Employment
Friendships
Moral Support
Confidence
Opportunities
Involvement
Beyond

Remaining in French immersion at the secondary level is an important step if your child is to achieve a high enough level of French language proficiency to feel at ease using the language in a variety of situations, pursue further study with French as the language of instruction, or accept employment which requires the use of French. While he may seem quite fluent to you by the end of grade 6 or 9, his skills will begin to deteriorate without continued exposure to French.

The majority of school boards in Alberta offer 60-75% of instructional time in French in grades 7-9. However, senior high programs vary widely across the province, offering from one French language arts course per year to a full course load in French (except, of course, English language arts). Often what is offered is determined by student interest and the commitment of students and parents to the program at the high school level.

The objectives of a good continuing immersion program should be to not only maintain the level of French language ability achieved during the elementary years but also to **expand** a student's competence in the language in keeping with his increasing intellectual maturity, social development and knowledge base. To meet these objectives, a program should offer:

- at least 50% of instructional time in French each year, including some French studies in each semester throughout high school;
- a variety of language-rich subjects taught in French. As well as French language arts, social studies and the sciences, subjects such as Career and life management[1], drama, Career and technology studies courses, and physical education (with its greater emphasis at the secondary level on rules and theory) provide excellent opportunities for vocabulary and language growth;
- a good supply of French reference and audiovisual materials, computer software, textbooks and books for leisure reading.

"Once muscles have been developed, they should go on being exercised or they will lose their strength. Whatever your immersion experience may have been, if you want to maintain or improve your French, you must continue to use it." This is the advice given to young immersion students in **French Immersion: The Trial Balloon That Flew,** ***a booklet published by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education as a guide for students entering their secondary education.***

Decisions, decisions...

You made the initial decision to enrol your child in early French immersion. By grade 6, he'll want to have some say in his education, and by the time he's ready to plan for senior high school, he'll likely have some very definite ideas about his program choices. Whether to continue his studies in French is one of them.

We suggest you tackle this together. First, review your original reasons for wanting your child to learn French. Talk together about his own goals and plans for the future. Look over the sections of this book which discuss the value and benefits of knowing a second language (pages 16 and 82) and the realistic expectations of an early immersion program (page 37). Next, compare perceptions, yours as his parent and his own as a student, of his competence in French and the value of the experiences he has had with the language so far. Many students begin to feel insecure and frustrated at about this stage—while their parents believe they are already completely bilingual! Work together to put his language learning into perspective. Then, investigate the opportunities available to him by looking at high school course offerings, attending open houses and information meetings, and talking to school counsellors. Your encouragement and confidence in your child's ability to continue his studies in French will be important as he explores his options.

What factors might influence his decision?

As you gather information and explore the possibilities with your child, many questions and concerns will no doubt arise. We've found that a number of factors influence the decision to continue studies in French and often tip the scale in favour of other choices. Sometimes a student's reasons for not continuing in immersion are valid—in some way the program available does not meet his needs (for example, the high school that offers the International Baccalaureate program may not offer any continuing immersion courses). Sometimes, however, lack of motivation, lack of information, or a student's and/or parent's misperceptions about studying in French in high school are the basis of the decision.

The loss of immersion students, particularly between junior and senior high school, concerns educators and parents who recognize that the full benefits of the program require a kindergarten (or grade 1) through grade 12 experience. A 1991 national study conducted for Canadian Parents for French by Nancy Halsall[2] found that between 20 and 80 percent of immersion students left the program at high school. The main reasons for doing so included:

- the belief that better grades can be obtained by studying in English,
- lack of opportunity to speak French in the classroom and outside of class,
- not enough variety of courses offered in French,
- taking courses in French makes the work load too heavy,
- being locked into the academic (10/20/30) stream in order to take any courses in French,
- a preference for other specialized programs, such as the International Baccalaureate (I.B.) Program,
- satisfaction with their level of fluency in French,
- boredom with the program,
- concerns about program and teacher quality,
- pressure from peers,
- an unwillingness to attend the school offering the continuing immersion program.

Here are some things you and your child should know as you weigh the choices and consider the above factors:

"... research has shown that in order to retain a second language, it helps to have learned as much as possible to begin with. The level of proficiency that learners reach has emerged as one key indicator of their future level of retained proficiency... . Lack of use of the language does appear to lead to a certain amount of decline for learners of both higher and lower levels of proficiency, but the corollary is that the more one knows of the language, the less one stands to lose in proportion to what was originally learned ... ."[3]

- The belief that a student will achieve better grades in high school if he studies in English is a common misperception which has no foundation in quantitative research, nor is it supported by student results on Alberta Education's diploma exams (see p. 33).
- Grade 12 immersion students in Alberta have the option of writing diploma examinations in the language of their choice, either English or French. This means that, for example, if your child takes Social Studies 30 in French he may, if he prefers, write the diploma exam in English. It's good to know, too, that some diploma exams undergo a "double translation" process. That is, they are translated into French by one set of developers, then translated back into English by another group to ensure that the language is accurate and appropriate.
- The concern that students who study mathematics and the sciences in French in high school will be confused by English terms at the post-secondary level is unfounded. Most scientific and mathematical terms are based on Latin or a person's name and are therefore very similar in both English and French (for example, photosynthesis and la photosynthèse, Pascal's triangle and le triangle de Pascal). Also, the French names of chemicals more often correspond directly with their symbols than do their English names, making the periodic table easier to learn in French and remember if he knows both languages (e.g., the periodic symbol for iron is Fe, iron in French is le fer). Immersion students who have later studied math and science in both languages report little or no difficulty with terminology.
- The only difference between the workload of continuing immersion and other high school students is the additional language course (French language arts). Where the other students choose a full course load (for instance, taking complimentary courses such as core French, German, or drafting), the workload is virtually the same.
- Your child's efforts in French will be acknowledged. The Alberta high school transcript indicates which courses were taken in French; in addition, your school board may be one of the many which offer a certificate of achievement (or of bilingualism) for students who have taken a specified number of courses in French.
- The demand for well-qualified teachers has resulted in more and better programs being offered by Canadian universities specifically for training teachers of French immersion. Also, curriculum and classroom materials for high school immersion courses are constantly being developed and improved, providing teachers and students with resources equivalent to those used in the English program.
- French Language Arts 10, 20, 30 is the intended French course sequence for immersion students entering high school. These courses continue to parallel English language arts throughout the secondary years, refining the immersion students' French language skills and exposing them to French literature. If your board or the school you choose does not offer at least this minimum opportunity for immersion students to continue to study French, then check carefully before choosing a core French (FSL) course (called French 10, 20, 30, 13, 31, etc.). Core French high school courses have different goals from FLA, and offer varying levels of French.
- An immersion student may challenge the core French (FSL) final grade 12 exam in order to obtain a mark in that subject as well as some extra credits. This may give him an

excellent mark on his transcript for use when applying to post-secondary institutions and for scholarships.

What are some school boards doing to help?

While some obstacles to choosing the continuing immersion program are matters of student or parent perception, others are administrative in nature. Some boards are finding creative ways to improve their programs to better meet the needs of students and encourage students to continue their studies in French throughout high school. Here are some of the things being done:

- Many boards now promote their continuing immersion programs by holding information meetings for parents and special sessions for students. Some schools have senior high school immersion students visit grade 8 and 9 students to explain the program, talk about other aspects of their school (such as clubs, sports, and music programs), and answer questions. In the spring, the senior students may host an open house for grade 9 students who have the opportunity to tour the school, sample classes, talk to the teachers, and meet students from other junior high schools in the district. Such activities help students accept moving to a new school and establish a supportive peer group.
- Trips, exchanges, or other out-of-school French activities are arranged for junior high school students to give them an opportunity to experience the real-life benefits of their French skills. This is sometimes all the encouragement they need to continue their studies in French in senior high. Some schools arrange such activities for their senior secondary students as an incentive to continue and as a way to address their need to use and experience the language.
- Some high schools hold regular meetings ("les soirées") with their immersion parents and students, have a special section in the school newsletter which raises awareness about the immersion program, and involve both parents and students in setting goals and celebrating the successes of the program.
- Schedules can be arranged so that continuing immersion students can take advantage of a variety of complimentary courses. For instance, one school offers a full year English language arts course (rather than a one semester course) for French immersion students registered in its band program. Courses offered in French are scheduled over both semesters.
- Another innovation seen in a few Alberta senior high schools is a combined French language arts/social studies full-year course.
- The new Career and technology studies programs (some of which are available in French) offer opportunities for immersion students to expand their French skills through a wide variety of subject areas.
- Some senior high schools offer immersion students the opportunity to take a "partial International Baccalaureate" program while continuing to study some subjects in French.
- Distance education can give very small classes the opportunity to continue their studies of and/or in French. French distance education course materials are available in accounting, career and life management, French, mathematics, science and social studies. In addition, some grade 12 students have obtained university credits by taking a French language arts course through Athabasca University (instead of FLA 30).

- Teachers are finding new ways, through cooperative learning strategies, to involve students in classroom discussions in French so that they continue to improve their oral skills. One example is the social studies simulation exercise called "Lemuria" in which, over a period of two to three weeks, students own and run countries in cooperation with other students. In the French adaptation, the official language of the countries is French, and countries are fined if their citizens speak any other language.

At the secondary level, just as in elementary school, parental involvement and commitment are essential to the success of French immersion. If you or your child aren't satisfied with the high school program offered in your area, or if changes to the program would encourage more students to continue, make your concerns known to your principal, school council and school board. Be prepared to involve the students and to work with other parents for a better continuing immersion program.

In the years beyond high school...

While the learning of any language is a lifelong experience, when your child graduates from French immersion he should have reached a level of proficiency that will allow him to enjoy the benefits of bilingualism while continuing to develop his skills.

Opportunities to continue studies in French range from the usual French courses offered by college and university language departments through "immersion" university courses to attendance at Francophone institutions in Canada and abroad. There are summer courses, exchange programs and other opportunities available for the further development of French skills or even to acquire a third language.

Immersion graduates can maintain their French skills by reading, hearing and speaking the language through a variety of means. See the booklet *Keeping Up Your Skills and More in French* and two sections of this book: "The Importance of French Outside of School" (page 84) and "French Opportunities and Resources" (page 116), for many ideas.

There are opportunities in the workplace as well. Not only is there an obvious need for bilingual skills in the service sector—hotel and restaurant, travel and tourism, sales, clerical support, telecommunications, etc.—but there is a growing need in business, trade, financial and technical industries because of an increasingly global economy.

Joan Chielbelbein and Jennifer Lamb of the University of Alberta's Career and Placement Services agree, and add that more and more prospective employers are recognizing and demanding the other skills that bilingual individuals possess, such as flexible thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to work and negotiate easily with people from other countries and cultures. In their experience, employers are looking for individuals who are versatile, can communicate with branch offices in Quebec, and can travel or be moved into positions abroad. In addition, Ms. Lamb stressed that technology and languages go well together, such as in the computer software industry. At a recent International Career Forum sponsored by the University of Alberta, all five panelists emphasized second language skills as an essential for employability.

> ***"We have traditionally thought of the knowledge of other languages as keys that would open doors and provide new opportunities. It is still true. But another important fact is becoming evident. The events which have brought us together, both here and abroad, also threaten to tear us apart. Breaking down barriers of language and culture is a necessity and challenge that awaits and confronts each of us. We may pursue a career that utilizes this knowledge on a daily basis. Or we may simply require these insights and this knowledge to go about our lives. One thing is certain: knowledge of another language and culture will enhance your career—and broaden every aspect of your life."***[4]

Footnotes

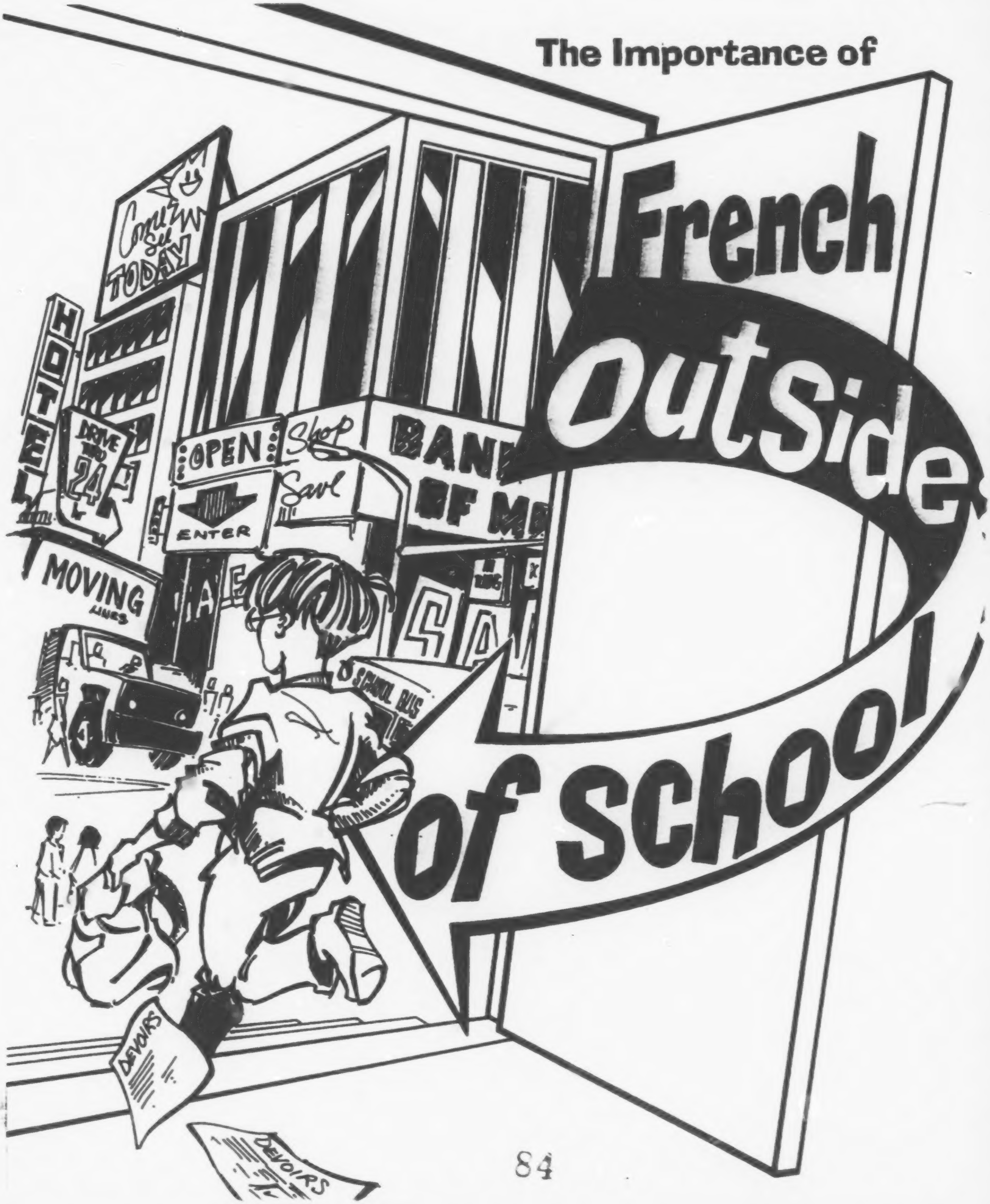
[1] CALM, a mandatory life-skills program for Alberta senior high school students.

[2] "Attrition / Retention of Students in French Immersion with Particular Emphasis on Secondary School".

[3] "Maintaining French as a Second Language in Adulthood." Birgit Harley, PhD. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 50(4), June 1994 (page 689).

[4] C. Edward Scebold, Executive Director, American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages, in the foreword to *Careers for Foreign Language Aficionados and Other Multilingual Types*. H. Ned Seelye and J. Laurence Day. VGM Career Horizons, NTC Publishing Group, Chicago, 1992.

The Importance of French Outside of School


Come See TODAY
HOTEL
DRIVE THRU 24
OPEN
Shop
Save
ENTER
BANK OF M
MOVING LINES
SCHOOL BUS
DEVOIRS
DEVOIRS

Just as your child's education is not limited to the time she spends in school nor to the experiences she has there (see page 44), so her French language development should not be left solely to the French teacher. As successful as it is, the immersion classroom is an artificial setting in which to learn a second language. Children need to experience French as a living language (unlike Latin), to associate it with a broad range of people (not just teachers), and to learn about the everyday life and culture of their Francophone peers (not only folk dances and chansons).

Just consider the amount of English—vocabulary, structures, usage—that she learned from you and from watching TV, going to the circus, reading, participating in sports and hobbies, and so on. To become well rounded in both languages, your child needs French language experiences outside of the school setting similar to those she has in English.

"We call it French immersion, but in reality they are immersed in English, with a long swim in French five days a week, ten months a year. It takes children a long time to master their first language, and although learning a second language is faster, it will take them a long time ... to acquire a true knowledge of French, the knowledge of what 'sounds right' in French. ... You can help your children learn French in the same way as you helped them to learn English—by providing experiences with the language."[1]

As students move into junior and senior high school, extracurricular experiences become even more important. In most school boards, the amount of time spent learning in French decreases, and an increasing proportion of that limited time is spent listening to lectures and reading texts. One of the common complaints from graduates is the lack of opportunities to speak the language during the final school years. Also, as French is associated only with academic subjects such as mathematics, language arts and social studies, and less and less with the world of teenage interests, the students' initial pride and enthusiasm often wanes. Fun French activities outside of school become increasingly important in motivating students to continue their second language studies and in exposing them to a broad range of topics and social situations.

Cultural exposure is an important part of these experiences. "Culture is the general context and way of life. It is the behaviours and beliefs of a community of people whose history, geography, institutions, and commonalities are distinct and distinguish them to a greater or lesser degree from all other groups."

"Cultural content adds to the authenticity of communicative teaching in two ways. Firstly, speaking French is more than speaking English with French words. There is a cultural context to language which includes things such as regional accents, gestures, proper social forms, niveaux de langue [levels of language], sensitive values, etc. The cultural dimension will make communication truly authentic. Secondly, to communicate, one must communicate about something. ... Cultural themes are appropriate because they add to the student's preparation for effective communication with Francophones."[2]

When choosing French language activities, remember to include those which will

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expose her to the cultural aspects of language and to Francophone peers and role models, as well as those which simply expose her to the language.

Just a little work and encouragement on your part can make a significant difference to your child's attitude to and achievement in French. You made a big decision when you enrolled her in French immersion—don't shortchange her by not providing some out-of-school language and cultural experiences. These need not be terribly expensive or time-consuming. The following suggestions offer a range of activities and are only a sampling of the many things you can do to enrich your child's French language learning. The French resource list beginning on page 116 will give you even more ideas and information on where you can track down many of the resources mentioned below.

Bring French into your home

Including some French in your everyday home life early on will help to make it a habit throughout your child's schooling. You'll learn some French, too—it can be fun and enriching for the whole family!

Many of the best and easiest ways to enrich your child's French come from the same bag of tricks that parents have always used. For example, when she's young, she can have hours of fun using labels from cans and food packages. Scrapbooks and collages can be made from the brightly coloured pictures of fruits, vegetables and other familiar products. She won't realize she's learning vocabulary and spelling as she cuts and pastes!

I Spy can be played in French. Make your own game by printing on cards the French names for objects in a particular room of the house (here's where your old high school French/English dictionary will come in handy). Have your child try to place as many labels as possible on the correct objects within a certain time frame. (When you make the labels, don't forget to include the article, *le* or *la*, so that your child will learn whether each noun is masculine or feminine.)

A Drumheller family has come up with a solution to boring car rides. Depending on your child's age, have her say a word, sentence or phrase in French. Then the rest of the family guesses what was said and tries to repeat it. You'll be surprised to discover how much your child enjoys stumping the family—while she becomes less inhibited about speaking French. The game seems to work because the children are able to use their own words to interpret what is being said. They are never put into a situation where they don't know the answer—and they enjoy hearing their parents say "I don't know!" for a change.

When she's a little older, introduce board and computer games. Playing a French board game with a French immersion friend can be a great way for your child to spend a rainy Saturday afternoon. Scrabble is available in French (and can be played with the aid of a dictionary if necessary), as are Monopoly, Careers, Clue, and many others. A variety of computer games and software is becoming more widely available for computer buffs of all ages, so if your child spends hours glued to the screen with mouse in hand, why not encourage her to play one French game for every English one?

Music can motivate anyone according to Suzanne Pinel, a well-known Franco-Ontarian children's entertainer and recording artist. "By its nature 'music,' and more specifically 'songs,' make learning the French language as easy and pleasant as playing a game. ... Songs encourage the acquisition of spoken French because they develop aural and oral skills. ... Repetition of French songs gives the child an opportunity to pronounce sounds that do not exist in the English language... ."[3] They also provide a window onto French culture. Tapes and music videos have been developed especially for immersion students by many Francophone artists. Family sing-a-longs can be great fun while driving or while sitting around the fireplace or campfire—ask your child to teach you a few of her favourites to add to the family's repertoire. When she's older, encourage her to listen to current French music by artists such as Mitsou, Roch Voisine and Céline Dion. (While secondary immersion students know they're quite capable of speaking with French teachers, they're often concerned that they'd have little in common with Francophone teens.)

Watching a French video can be fun and enriching at any age. The voices provide additional linguistic models and vocabulary is developed as your child uses the action on the screen to help her understand. When she's young, watching one that's a favourite in English (such as a Disney story) will help with word recognition if the language level is difficult.

Check local television and radio listings for programs of interest. Older children can help read the schedules. Begin with cartoons and Sesame Street; when she's older, encourage her to watch hockey games in French (Mom or Dad can watch, too!), music programs, quiz shows, even—as she begins high school social studies—news reports. Use the VCR to record programs scheduled for inconvenient times.

French reading materials are a must. Just as her English literacy skills will be enhanced by reading in English, so reading in French will improve her vocabulary, grammar and creative ability in that language. Unfortunately, once your child learns to read in English, you'll probably find that she loses her enthusiasm for reading in French (see "Encourage reading in French" on page 68). Having a variety of French reading materials lying casually around the house will help to rekindle her interest. For instance, what budding young naturalist could resist picking up a copy of *Hibou* (*Owl* magazine) from the coffee table? French books and magazines are available for all ages and interests. French newspapers may interest her when she's older and help with current affairs study in school. (They also advertise local French social and cultural events she may want to take in.) Even comic books provide exposure to the language for the more reluctant reader.

One family has successfully encouraged French reading by allowing their children to read in bed for half an hour before lights-out each night—if they read in French.

Hiring French-speaking babysitters is another great way to bring French into your home. A Francophone sitter is an ideal way to provide another French language model for your child, someone who can talk, sing and read to her, and even carry out the bedtime routine in French. Older immersion students can also benefit from the challenge by being responsible for providing a French experience for your child—and they have the advantage of knowing the little tricks that their teachers used to get across meaning and to encourage them to speak in French.

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Enjoy French in your community

Once you start investigating, you'll likely be amazed by the opportunities to hear and use French within your local community or nearby.

Sports clubs, dance and music lessons, cubs and scouts, as well as brownies and guides may be offered in French and provide a good opportunity for immersion students to spend time with their Francophone peers. Parks and Recreation programs are sometimes offered in French, or can be if enough interest is shown by parents and children. Older children can become involved in bilingual debating clubs. Science fair entries can often be done in French. The Calgary Bar Association includes French events in its annual Law Day.

French theatre, movies and concerts are especially helpful in broadening the cultural perspective of immersion students. Many communities with large enough Francophone populations offer a good variety of such entertainment.

Traditional celebrations such as Le Festival de la cabane à sucre (the annual "sugaring-off" party) and Carnaval (winter carnival) give glimpses into French-Canadian history, folklore, cuisine and joie de vivre. Non-French-speaking members of the community are always welcome but should be sensitive to the intent of the organizers to establish a French milieu. The more your family enters into the spirit of these events, with your child as your language guide, the more fun you'll all have!

Canadian Parents for French chapters and other local immersion parents' groups often organize French activities for the whole family: tobogganing and skating parties, Christmas parties with Père Noël, summer picnics, concerts by Francophone entertainers, family dances, and so on. These are fun for all, with the added bonus of giving the parents a chance to hear their children using their French.

Keeping it up over the summer

French summer camp is a wonderful way for immersion students to have fun in the sun (or the pouring rain, for that matter) and to practice their French while school is out. Locally there are day camps for elementary children which offer arts and crafts, sports and games, music and stories, and sometimes conclude with a campfire and sleep-over. Summer residential camps are available in Alberta for older children. If you're planning to travel or if your children visit relatives in other parts of the country during the summer, why not look into camps in other provinces? If you're headed for Quebec, you'll find a wonderful variety of residential French camps for most ages and interests. These are excellent ways to motivate older students, while improving not only their language skills but also their confidence in using French.

If your child will be entering grade 1 without the benefit of previous exposure to French, a summer day camp with young immersion students can help to prepare her. Before enrolling her, talk to the counsellors to be sure they are prepared to encourage and support her. You'll be surprised how much French she can learn in a week!

Parents can go to camp, too. Family French camps provide a campsite for the family tent or motorhome and a day program for the children, with the emphasis on fun and safety in the great outdoors—in French. You can relax during the day and enjoy the camaraderie and support of your fellow immersion parents while your child is kept busy. The evening campfires are great fun in both languages.

Travel and tourism

Travel can bring a language alive! A family trip isn't just an opportunity for your children to hear and practice their French—they can write away for brochures, practice reading French, and help the rest of the family plan your itinerary. Send away to provincial tourism offices for information. There are also guidebooks in the travel or French-language sections of bookstores and libraries.

A vacation right here in Alberta—whether a day trip, a weekend, or a couple of weeks—can include a variety of French experiences. In the Peace River area, in communities such as Falher and Donnelly, you will hear French spoken on the streets and in stores and restaurants. Girouxville has an excellent museum on early French-speaking settlers, with French tours available and everything labelled in French. St. Isidore, also in the Peace River area, is well known for its annual French winter carnival. It also has a cultural centre where you can watch Les Tisserandes, a group of French women famous for their traditional weaving. St. Albert and St. Paul also have French museums, and St. Paul is home to La Société des blés d'or, a well-known French folk dance group. Other Alberta communities such as Beaumont, Bonnyville, Plamondon and Legal, also have a French history and vibrant French communities which regularly host activities and cultural events (see page 122). La Fête franco-albertaine has become a popular weekend event held in the summer, attracting upwards of 3,000 Francophones and francophiles. Check with Travel Alberta offices or the Francophone association (page 121) for information and more ideas.

Farther from home, there's a multitude of attractions in Quebec: the winter Carnaval in Québec City, with everyone's favourite, Bonhomme Carnaval (February); the historic sites of Québec City; the sophistication of Montréal; La Ronde (the large amusement park in Montréal); historical villages; and many different regions, from the rolling Gatineau Hills to Gaspé, with its famous rocher Percé.

But don't forget the other provinces. Here are just a few suggestions: the Acadian regions of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island (including Les Jeux de l'Acadie held each June in the Maritimes); the Festival du voyageur in Winnipeg each February; La Semaine francophone in Toronto and the Festival franco-ontarien in Ontario each June; the Festival du bois in Coquitlam (just outside Vancouver) each March and Le Fête colombienne des enfants in the Vancouver area the last week of April.

All national parks and many provincial ones offer information, pamphlets, tours and activities in French. Look for museums, historical villages and landmarks which might provide information (including tours or tapes) in French.

Exchanges and visits in Canada and abroad

There's no better language experience than being submerged in the everyday life and culture of a native speaker. Exchanges offer the perfect opportunity for older students and young adults to round out their French skills while sharing in family life, shopping, going to parties, and perhaps attending school in a French community. A number of organizations arrange exchanges of one week to several months or a year in duration, for individuals, groups or families in Canada and abroad—take your pick! Some involve "paired" students spending time in each others' homes, while others are one-way excursions. As a family you can even spend time on a farm in Quebec, living with a French-speaking family.

Some schools and parents' organizations arrange class exchanges or trips. Fundraising projects are organized to help reduce the cost. These activities often help students make the decision to continue their French studies in high school or university. Group trips don't offer all of the language opportunities experienced during exchanges, but they can be very worthwhile if the organizers and chaperones encourage the use of French and arrange for billeting in French homes or activities with young Francophones. Information to get you started is provided in the section on "French Opportunities and Resources" beginning on page 116. Look under "Camps" and "Live, study, and/or work in a Francophone environment."

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Canadian Parents for French local, provincial and national newsletters.

"Franco Fun." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*

"Joie de vivre: A Dialogue on Co-Curricular Activities." *More French, s'il vous plaît!*

Footnotes

[1] *What parents can do to help students in immersion programs.* Vicky A. Gray, University of New Brunswick (preliminary draft of a paper presented to the 1984 Canadian Parents for French national conference).

[2] *Syllabus Culture*. Clarence LeBlanc, Claudine Courtel, Pierre Trescases. National Core French Study (pages xii and xiii).

[3] "Learning French through Music." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* (pages 37-38).

Why isn't my child happy at school?

Many of us parents wonder if we're doing the right thing when we enrol our children in French immersion, and our self-doubt escalates whenever they seem unhappy. Our first reaction may be to blame the program. This is unhelpful if something else is the real problem—as is usually the case. Blaming the immersion program might delay dealing with the true cause of the unhappiness—and perhaps deny a child the gift of a second language.[1]

If your child seems unhappy, how can you get at the root of the problem? Considering the following questions might help.

Is he enjoying kindergarten?

In kindergarten, your child will be concentrating most of his energy on adapting to the demands of school life. To him the language will likely be incidental (see "The 'gentle approach'" on page 26). If he complains about not wanting to go to school or not liking school, or seems especially tired after school, chances are it isn't French immersion that is causing his upset. It could be his separation from you, loss of his daycare buddies, or getting used to the classroom rules and routines which is upsetting him. Try asking him about his day (for example, what he likes doing, what he doesn't like doing), and talk with his teacher about how he's settling in and what you can do to help.

Does my child feel uncomfortable with the teacher?

Especially in the early grades, this is vital. To understand what is bothering him, encourage him to talk about school. Meet with the teacher, and, if possible, observe the class in action. Try to explain the teacher to the child, and vice versa. Be tactful, because teachers often feel threatened by complaining parents, and there could be misunderstandings if the teacher's English is limited. If problems continue, consult the principal and, if appropriate, determine alternate solutions.

Is it early in the school year?

Every year begins with an adjustment period. How long it takes depends on the child's personality and many other factors. Because Francophone teachers come from many different places, a child may have trouble understanding the new teacher's accent and turns of phrase (ever been confused listening to an Australian?). Time will solve this, so counsel patience. Meeting people from other parts of the country and the world is one of the enriching aspects of French immersion.

Does my child have friends and enjoy play times?

Or does he feel lonely, teased, or picked on? A child's self-esteem is of primary importance, and, for many, friends can be one of the best parts of attending school. If this is more than an occasional worry, take action to head off long-term problems. Invite classmates for visits and outings. Since athletic ability is so important, boys especially need to develop some basic skills that others will respect (however, don't push a child to excel in sports if that isn't his "thing"). Girls seem to form cliquey friendship groups early, so a daughter might need some morale-boosting if she's feeling left out. Continuing playground problems should be reported to the school.

Does my child seem overtired or worried about being far from home?

Especially if your child is bused, he may need more sleep, fewer extracurricular activities, more high energy snacks in the morning. If you can drop in or volunteer sometimes, he'll be thrilled and feel more secure. Young children also need the security of knowing that someone will collect and care for them if they become ill at school.

Does my child usually feel well at school?

Or does he have symptoms of allergies and environmental sensitivities such as chronic feelings of tiredness, headaches, stomach aches, a runny nose, sore throat or eyes, or "colds" that drag on and on? Perhaps he's bothered by something in the school (dust, moulds, cleaning products, duplicating fluids, chemicals from labs, etc.). Consult your family doctor and/or an allergist. Read about new research and suggestions—the public library is useful. Contact a parents' allergy association.

Does the teacher complain that my child doesn't sit still, doesn't concentrate, daydreams, works slowly?

Find out whether this is a minor problem or a major one that seriously interferes with learning. All young children find it hard to sit still; only a few have ongoing difficulty. A daydreamer might be bright and bored. A slow worker might be super-conscientious. If your child is doing fairly well anyway, don't worry.

On the other hand, a grade 1 student may not be ready for the demands because of his personality, background or maturity level. Or there may be a learning disability that requires diagnosis and help.

In any case of difficulty with school work, cooperate with the teacher to find solutions. Try not to make your child feel worried or pressured to perform beyond his ability. Self-confidence is essential for learning. If a child doesn't feel confident that he can succeed, he won't even want to try.

Is this a school problem or a home problem?

Home is the most important thing in a young child's life. If he's worried or unhappy about that, he won't be able to concentrate on school work.

Try to establish a home atmosphere where feelings are shared and problems are aired. Make it easy for your child to confide in you by being available, interested and non-judgmental. Also, don't assume that what seems small and unimportant to you is the same for your child. To him, it may seem huge. If you treat it lightly, he may stop telling you things that you need to hear. You have to play this one by ear, because overreacting is also risky. Your child may simply want a sympathetic listener and be horrified if you rush off to confront someone, or otherwise "make waves."

If there is a problem at home—such as a serious illness, the death of a family member or a well-loved pet, a separation—let the teacher know so that she can take this into consideration when dealing with your child.

Is there a specific school situation which needs to be addressed?

Of course, there could be a difficulty connected with the actual school program, with the way certain classes or subjects are being taught, shortages of books or other supplies, and so on. These are often the same sorts of problems that could arise in the English program, and the same advice applies. Work with others—the teacher, the principal, other parents—to get them resolved. Your school council or an active Canadian Parents for French chapter can be very helpful, so do your bit to ensure that one is there when you need it.

Keep things in perspective!

Of course, you won't face all these problems, but over the course of the years you may meet some of them. No one ever promised that parenting would be easy! But it is very rewarding. If you keep the lines of communication open, respect your child's opinions, encourage independence, help when you can, and don't give up on loving, some day you'll be the proud friend of a bilingual adult—and the problems that once loomed so large will almost be forgotten.

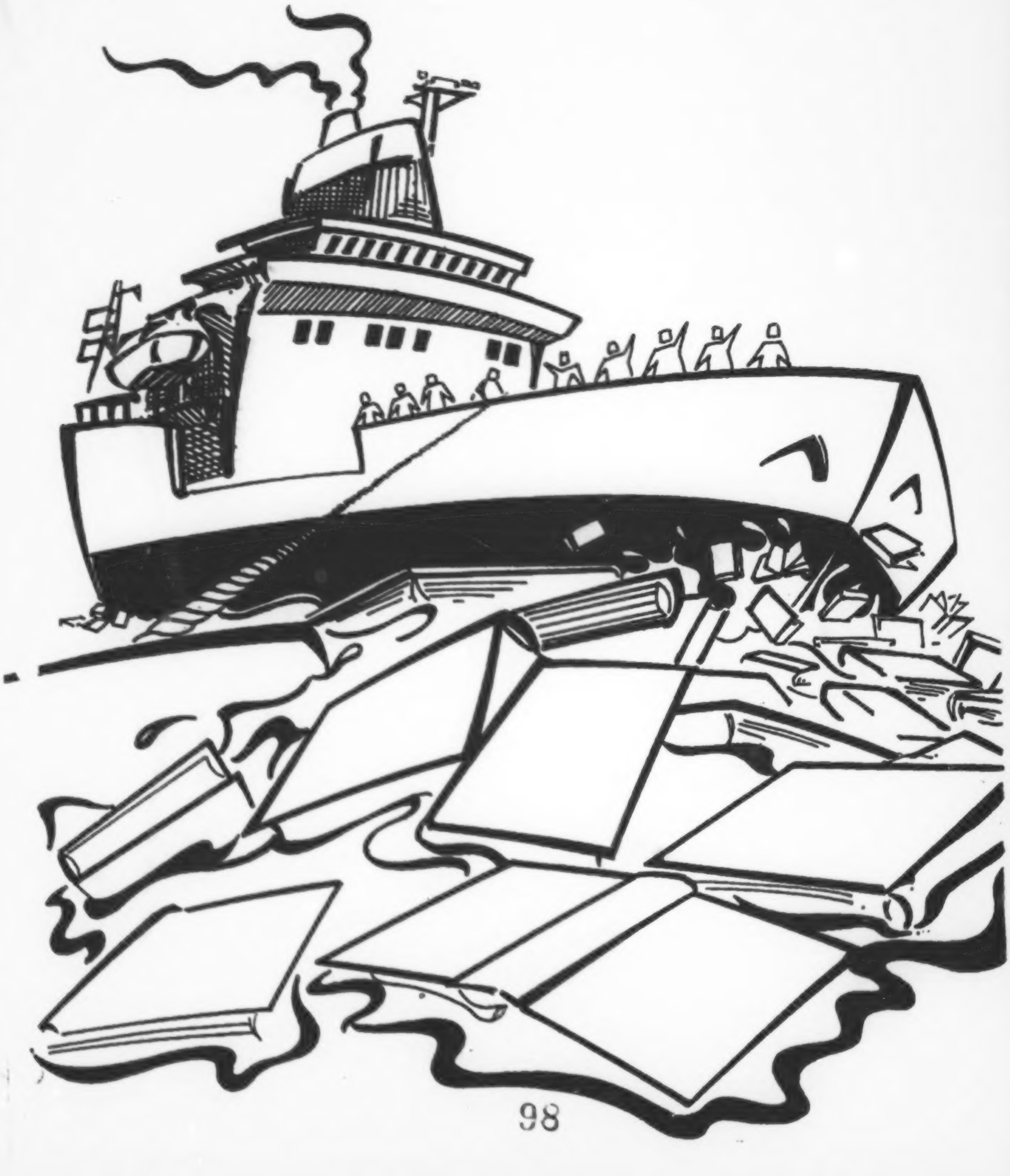
FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Basics of Success: How to Give your Child an Edge in School, chapters 6, 7, and 9.

Footnotes

[1] This chapter is adapted from an article written by Margaret Fitch of Calgary. A mother who has seen five children through the school system (early immersion, late immersion, and the English program), Mrs. Fitch has also taught at the elementary level and been involved with preschool programs, a day care and an alternative elementary school. The article first appeared in the *CPF Alberta Newsletter* 40, fall 1993.

But my Child is...



Whether the local report cards use A/B/C letter grades, E(xcellent) / S(atisfactory) / N(eeds improvement), or another system, every parent hopes to see his child attain his full potential as a learner. In addition to all the other questions that arise if your child experiences some difficulty in school, you might begin to ask yourself whether participation in French immersion is causing or at least exacerbating the situation. We hope this section will give you the information you need to resolve the problem.

What is "inclusive education"?

In a nutshell, "inclusive education" means that students with special needs are involved in the regular classroom, and that teachers serve all students through individualized learning. The expectation is not that all students will reach the same level of achievement at the same time, but that each student is being challenged to reach her own maximum potential

It also means that teachers should be less isolated in their classrooms, and that they should have easy and ongoing access to other educators and professionals for information and support. There should be less duplication and fragmentation of services and more of a team approach to problem solving.

Varying degrees of inclusion are recommended by the experts, from integrating those with mild handicaps/disabilities (continuing to deal separately with those with moderate to severe handicaps/disabilities) to full integration of all children. The trend in education, as in society as a whole, is to recognize that children learn in different ways and at different rates (see page 54) and that teachers must deal with them as individuals. If that's the case within the regular English program, it should also be the case for French immersion.

The Alberta Education policy is that "educating students with special needs in regular classrooms in neighbourhood or local schools shall be the first placement option considered by school boards, in consultation with students, parents/guardians, and school staff."[1] This policy, which does not exclude French immersion, implies that:

- the focus must be on the best interests of the child: to provide all students, including those with exceptional needs, with adequate education programs that meet their unique needs;
- there must be encouragement and support for the participation of special needs students in regular activities within the family, the school, and the community;
- there must be provision for meaningful ongoing student and parental input in programming and placement decisions;
- there must be continuity in the programs and services; and
- learner expectations, resources, instructional strategies, physical environments, and evaluation methods must be modified to meet individual student needs.

What are the early warning signs?

⚠ Following are some signals that you should confer with the teacher:[2]

kindergarten	- your child often has difficulty expressing herself clearly in her first language (that is, she can't get her meaning across) or difficulty articulating some sounds in her mother tongue[3]
grade 1	- she has difficulty paying attention even for short periods of time
	- she is unable to echo words and phrases in French
	- very little letter/sound recognition
grade 2	- there is very little word identification
	- she has difficulty paying attention for extended periods of time
grade 3	- she often has difficulty understanding or recalling the information from a story she hears or reads
	- she often has difficulty giving information about something she has just seen or experienced
	- difficulty with phonetic analysis of words
grade 4/5	- she is still reversing letters
	- difficulty with phonetic analysis hinders comprehension
at any time	- continuing unhappiness at school
	- ongoing behavioural or social problems
	- sudden changes in behaviour
	- obvious lack of confidence
	- a definite lack of interest in learning French

On the other hand, it's not unusual...

... for children who are exceptionally "bright" to be frustrated at first because they're used to understanding easily or to having their curiosity satisfied quickly.

... for some shy or anxious children to be reluctant to participate in class activities. This may at first slow the development of their French speaking skills.

... for the youngest children in the class and for boys to experience some delays in acquiring readiness skills and academic skills (research shows that some boys do not develop psycholinguistic abilities as quickly as girls).

However, none of these mean that a child should not remain in the French immersion program. In fact, it might lead you and the teacher to identify and deal with these sorts of factors earlier than you would in the English stream.

How are problems approached?

Whether you or the teacher first perceive that something may be hindering your child's academic progress, the following is a general outline of what should happen next.

1. If you're the first to raise the question, make an appointment with the teacher (if your child has more than one teacher, you might request that they all be involved). Give the teacher an indication of the reason for the meeting, so that she can be prepared for the discussion. Come prepared to give examples which illustrate the reason for your concern.
2. Whoever asks for the initial discussion, come with an open mind. Remember that you and the teacher see your child from different perspectives, in different types of situations. Children tend to behave differently in group situations and with their peers than they do at home. You know your child better, but the teacher works with children on a daily basis, and knows the curriculum. The process of comparing notes, of identifying similarities and differences in your child's behaviour, achievement, and attitudes at home and at school is a very important first step in narrowing down and identifying the most likely source(s) of the problem.

> ***"Educational difficulties involve variables that are vague, abstract, and 'within-child' (cognitive processing skills, intelligence, cooperation, motivation, verbal reasoning, etc.), yet also include variables such as teacher skill, teacher style, parental support, external stimulation, and learning opportunity. Transitory influences such as mood, fatigue, illness, and personal difficulties also impact upon learning. ... Learning is not determined solely by within-child variables, but rather by a multitude of variables within both the child and the child's learning environment: teacher skills, teacher style, effective strategies, corrective feedback, classroom management, peer relationships, class size, classroom dynamics, parental support, etc. ... Academic problems may in fact reside within students, but not to the exclusion of other variables. ... The notion that the***

student owns the problem, therefore fix or remove the student must be dispelled." - J. Linda Keep, PhD. French Immersion Attrition: Implications for Model Building, doctoral thesis for the University of Alberta Department of Educational Psychology (pages 239-240).

3. You and the teacher should agree to a plan of action, for both school and home. This should include a timeframe and some objectives: what do you both hope these strategies will accomplish. It might include gathering more information, such as having your child's health, eyesight and hearing checked (be sure to let the professionals know why this is being done) or interviewing others with whom your child is in regular contact (such as a club leader, sports coach, or babysitter).

4. Keep a record of what was said and decided at this and any further meetings. Consider setting up a consistent schedule of meetings for follow-up purposes. You may want to start a notebook so that you aren't relying on your memory. Such a journal would also be useful to note your observations of your child. You are the one who sees your child day in and day out, in a wide variety of circumstances. You will be able to use these notes to provide your child's current and future teachers with a much more complete picture than they will get during ten months in a classroom.

5. Carry out your part of the action plan to the best of your ability. Remember that your moods and reactions will influence your child's attitude. Be positive whenever he's anywhere within earshot, keeping any concerns and frustrations for times when he cannot possibly overhear.

   Speak with your child about the situation. Listen to and acknowledge his feelings. Help him to understand that he's not stupid or handicapped—that everyone learns at different rates (for example, babies walk and talk at different times), that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses, that there are many different learning styles, that the brain is an extremely complex organ (just imagine all that it does!). You, the teacher, your child, and perhaps some other "helpers" are together going to develop a set of strategies especially tailored just for him. (For more see "Help your child to cope" on page 108.)

6. Even if you believe your child has made significant progress, have a follow-up meeting with the teacher to again compare notes. This will allow you both to determine how to build on your success.

   If your strategies are not accomplishing what you'd hoped, it's time to do more brainstorming. At this point, the teacher may wish to ask other school staff to help develop new solutions. This gives the teacher a pool of experience and suggestions as well as some new perspectives to draw on.

7. Repeat steps #4 to #6.

8. If several strategies have been tried but have failed to address the problem, it's probably time to have your child assessed according to the referral procedure in place within your school or district. You have the right to give written consent for any formal evaluations to be conducted. Once the referral is made, consultation and/or assessment must occur within four weeks of the date of referral. The objective of assessment is not to label or to place your child, but to provide additional information on which to develop new strategies. Assessment is meant to identify a child's needs and to determine how best to address those needs. It should go beyond a statement of his current achievement levels to a diagnosis of the underlying problem and

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an understanding of his learning abilities and styles. Among the many areas which may be tested are: long- and short-term memory, auditory and visual processing and discrimination, reasoning skills, and so on.

9. Before your child is tested, speak with him about this process. Make sure he understands there's no question of right or wrong, marks or failure—that these are simply tools to help you and his teacher have a clearer picture of how he learns. The tests will help everyone understand how to build on his preferred ways of learning and how to work on his weaknesses.

10. The pattern of identifying, priorizing, implementing, and evaluating different strategies should continue. As appropriate, a broad range of supports may be involved: trained volunteers, other students (peer tutoring, cooperative learning, etc.), teacher aides/assistants, special education consultants, counsellors, doctors, speech pathologists, and so on.

While some difficulties are relatively straightforward, others can be complex and multifaceted. In the latter case, it could take several months and the input of a number of people before you fully understand how your child can best be helped. You shouldn't feel discouraged as long as honest efforts to work toward a solution are being made. Try to put these difficult weeks into the context of his whole life (remember when your first child had that first ear infection, and how long the nights seemed when you were walking the floor with him? seems like a pretty minor incident now, doesn't it?).

Testing: in English or in French?

Because of the complexity of assessing any individual, with the additional wrinkle of learning in a second language, it's usually necessary to use a number of different tools and consider their cumulative results. A number of diagnostic tests designed specifically for French immersion students are now available, but it's perfectly valid to do much of a student's assessment in English, as a large proportion of the information that you and the teacher need is not language-specific. However, it's essential that the tests be interpreted by someone with a good theoretical understanding of the immersion approach, someone who's able to judge whether and to what degree the difficulties encountered are caused by transfer and interference between languages or by the natural delays to be expected during the first few years of instruction in a second language.

Always remember that such tests are simply snapshots of specific aspects of your child. It's important to view them within the total picture of his functioning which you and his teacher observe on an ongoing basis.

What are the alternatives?

As we explained in the first section of this book, research indicates that a student will do as well in an early total immersion program as in the regular English program **if equivalent support is available**. In other words, it isn't the language of instruction that makes the difference, it's (1) the degree to which the program within a particular school meets the child's needs and (2) the extent to which the family and teachers are supportive and encouraging.

Learning difficulties occur with the same frequency in French immersion as in the regular English program. There are students with dyslexia, attention deficit disorder, behavioural problems, below average levels of intelligence, and other barriers to learning who are doing well in immersion—and becoming functionally bilingual!

It's also important to remember that early French immersion must not be considered an enrichment program for a student who needs an extra academic challenge. A child for whom other aspects of education come easily will also quickly develop competence in a second language. She, too, will need extra assistance if she's to reach her full potential.

The decision to leave in or remove your child from the immersion program must not be made lightly or hastily. We hope the following information will help you to make the best decisions about your child's education should any difficulty be experienced at school.

⚠ Learning assistance

Remaining in the program (even if a grade must be repeated) has the potential to offset your child's difficulty by boosting her self-esteem: she may be experiencing a problem in one area, but her competence in French is already better than mom's, or an older sibling's, or the neighbour's! In addition, your child is not being denied the opportunity to acquire a second language. When she graduates from school, even if she's not strong in some academic areas, she'll have the asset of a high level of fluency in French.

While it is usually preferable to provide assistance in French, this isn't always possible. Don't despair! Working closely with the immersion teacher, both you and a unilingual learning assistance specialist or other professional can make a tremendous difference. Remember that most learning difficulties are not language-specific. Once your child has acquired strategies to overcome them, those strategies will be transferred to the French setting when your child is shown the connections. Likewise, behavioural or social difficulties have nothing to do with the language of instruction. In any case, good coordination between the approaches used by you, by the teacher, and by the specialist(s) is very important.

If you decide to hire a tutor to work with your child out of school, it's extremely important to find someone who both understands and believes in the immersion program—whether the services are to be provided in English or in French. A unilingual specialist who strongly believes that immersion is for all children will be much better for your child than a French-speaking specialist who's convinced that only the best students can cope with education in a second language. An older immersion student, working under the direction of your child's teacher or learning assistance specialist, might be another option—and could seem less threatening to your child than an adult.

Repeating a grade

While providing the opportunity to continue learning French, repeating a grade can give your child a message of failure. Generally, however, the lower the grade that is repeated (kindergarten, grade 1, or perhaps grade 2), the less the impact on a child's self-esteem.

Once you're confident that this is the best decision, there's a simple message that you need to impart to your child, to friends and relatives, and to other children and adults with whom she will be in contact: repeating doesn't mean failure, it simply means she needs more time. Express your pride in your child's accomplishments—both in and out of school—(one of which may be the ability to understand and speak French) and your confidence that with time she will be a successful student.

You'll probably also need to be prepared for comments from relatives or friends about the effect of immersion on your child's academic progress. We hope the other sections of this book will make you feel comfortable about affirming that the French program did not cause your child to repeat.

Transferring to English

Switching out of immersion has the potential to damage your child's self-image. It may even, in certain circumstances, compound the difficulty your child is experiencing. However, there are times when a transfer should probably take place:

- Leaving the program would give your child access to critical services. For example, transferring to a program which relies far less on oral communication might be indicated for a child with a serious auditory difficulty (such as auditory processing problems or an inability to differentiate between similar sounds) unless consistent extra assistance can be provided to deal with that problem.
- If your child is not motivated and has a negative attitude toward the program: it must be remembered that she'll learn little when she doesn't want to learn, no matter what her level of ability.
- If you or your spouse's concerns toward the program affect your child's motivation.

Some also believe that immersion is not appropriate for an extremely small group of children described as "cognitively and linguistically immature."[5] They are not learning disabled, and seem to do well in kindergarten. It's the complexity of dealing with the academic demands in a second language that exceeds their level of development.

Whatever the reason for your decision, try to evaluate your child's perceptions of the transfer. Your child may well express a sense of relief. However, if there is a feeling of failure, you will need to help her put the situation into perspective. It's not that there is anything wrong with her: there was just not a good match between her needs (or your family's needs) and the immersion program as it presently exists in your community. Show your pride in her accomplishments—both in and out of school—and your confidence that with time she will be a successful student. If your child is disappointed about not learning French, remind her that there will be opportunities at the secondary level and even after high school to renew her language studies.

You will want to ensure that the new teacher has an understanding of your child's needs and strengths. It will also be very important that the teacher have some understanding of the immersion program. For example, you might wish to give her a copy of "The transition to reading in English" (page 67) and "Writing: a paragraph is a paragraph" (page 70). The teacher should be aware that there could be occasions when your child cannot answer a question because she is not familiar with the English term rather than because she does not know the concept. You might even want to do some role playing with your child to help her learn how to deal with such a situation (that is, how to ask the teacher to rephrase the question). The immersion teacher should also be able to provide some insights into the areas in which your child might need some specific coaching in order to ease this transition.

Above all, remember that your child will reflect your attitudes—so try to develop and convey the attitudes that you want your child to have. Whatever your decision, the next section, "How can I help?" is for you.

> ***"Any decision to change the placement of a child must be in the interest of the child—not of the program, the parents, or the teachers."***[6]

How can I help?

Keep the lines of communication open

Effective communication between you, your child, and the professionals can only help your child to overcome the difficulty. Do whatever you can to foster coordinated efforts—the worst thing for your child is for you and the others around him to be pulling in different directions.

You have the right to know:

- what types of testing have been done, the results of those tests, and the meaning of the results;
- how often your child has been observed, by whom, and what was reported;
- how your child behaves in various situations at school;
- the information in your child's school files;

- what strategies are being implemented to deal with his difficulty (and by whom), and how their effectiveness is being evaluated.

The school and any other professionals involved need:

- accurate information about your child's developmental history and his current behaviour and achievements out of school;
- to know of any relevant medical conditions;
- to know of any other significant stresses in your child's life;
- to know what steps you're taking to help your child.

Seek adequate assistance

You are your child's primary advocate. If you're not comfortable with the information you have received, you have the right to a second opinion.

If you're not satisfied with the support provided by the school staff (including any learning assistance or other resource people involved), it is important for both parties to meet to discuss their concerns and come to an agreement in the best interests of the child. Share your concerns with the teacher. The school principal is also available to meet with you and to hear your concerns. If, after a reasonable length of time, that does not lead to a resolution of your concerns, a process for dispute resolution and more formal appeal procedures are available. You should then contact the school district superintendent. The next step of appeal would be to the board of school trustees. Finally, parents have the right to request that the Minister of Education review certain school board decisions (Section 104 of the Alberta School Act).[4]

Parent groups can also provide assistance. Your school council, a local immersion parents' association such as Canadian Parents for French, or a support group for parents of learning disabled or gifted and talented children may be able to refer you to tutors or specialists as well as providing information and moral support (see pages 133-134).

Help your child to cope

The first step in helping your child to maintain a positive outlook is for yourself to be positive. When a child is experiencing difficulties, it's common for his parents to feel inadequacy, guilt, fear, and even grief. Your best weapons against these feelings are facts: things are always more frightening when you feel helpless and don't understand. Speak with others who are knowledgeable about your child type of difficulty. If you don't understand what a professional is telling you, ask questions. Consider joining a support group. Another strategy would be to do some further reading.

Don't let the difficulty get out of proportion within your child's life. Ensure that your child has enough time for rest, play and activities at which he will experience success. And take the same advice for yourself: it will be far more difficult to establish a positive atmosphere if you allow yourself to become angry or frazzled.

Give your child strategies for dealing with other children. Encourage him to talk with you about any negative reactions of his friends and classmates. Discuss what he might say or how he might act in these situations—you might even want to do some role-playing.

Don't let the difficulty become an excuse. Children can find a lot of reasons for not trying, including both "it's too easy" and "it's too hard." Even if your child learns very quickly, he still needs to understand all the steps and details, or he'll find himself in difficulty later in his education. If your child has difficulty learning, ensure that the expectations of the work are realistic for him, and then help him to believe that he can do it.

Speak with relatives and, if appropriate, babysitters, club leaders, sports coaches, and others with whom your child is in frequent contact. Help them to understand what strategies you're using and how they can also assist your child.

Learn how to deal with stress, and teach your child these techniques—they're valuable life skills in any case!

Most importantly: give your child lots and lots of love and honest praise.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Help! School Starts in September, pages 63-67, 85-109.

"Is There a Problem with Your Child's Education? Here's What To Do." Alberta Teachers' Association (pamphlet).

Parents, Kids, & Schools: Establishing an Academic Success Team in Elementary and High Schools, pages 71-91.

"Teaching the Gifted in Immersion." *More French, s'il vous plaît!*

The Basics of Success: How to Give your Child an Edge in School, pages 67-78.

"The Hidden Handicap: French Immersion and Children with Learning Disabilities." *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!*

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Footnotes

[1] Policy 1.6.1, *Policy, Regulations and Forms Manual*, Alberta Education, 1996.

[2] For information regarding indications of learning disabilities or giftedness, contact the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta or the Association for Bright Children (see page 134).

[3] Note that certain speech difficulties are actually helped when the child is given a fresh start in a new language and is involved in a program which depends so much on aural/oral work.

[4] For further information, please consult "Partners for Changing Times - An Information Booklet for Parents of Children with Special Needs" published by the Special Education Branch of Alberta Education and the College of Alberta School Superintendents, 1996.

[5] "Early French Immersion Programs May Not Be Suitable for Every Child." Corrinne Wiss, PhD. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 45(3), March 1989 (page 526).

[6] *"Learning Disabilities and Cross-linguistic Interference in French Immersion: When to Transfer, When not to Transfer?"* Daniel Demers, Learning Resource Specialist with B.C.'s School District #43 (Coquitlam). January 1994 (page 4).

What have students and graduates said about French IMMERSION

Studies of immersion graduates confirm their enthusiasm.[1] A 1992 study of immersion graduates in the Ottawa area reported that most were highly satisfied with their immersion experience and cited better job opportunities and functional French skills as their reasons. Many also noted a greater openness to other cultures. In this study, 19 out of 21 grads said they would send their own children to immersion programs, and although most had been late immersion students, 68% said they would choose early immersion for their own children.[2]

A similar study conducted in Saskatchewan in 1990 found that 86% of graduates were glad to have studied in French immersion and would do it again. 81% would "definitely" and 18% would "possibly" place their own children in the program.[3]

And when Duncan Nickerson, an immersion graduate from Calgary, informally surveyed his high school friends in 1992, they all agreed that they would do it all over again and would have felt deprived had they not been given the opportunity.[4]

Here's what a few others have said.

You have to work harder. It's a bit inconvenient, but it's worth it.[5]

It was an experience on its own. I am so glad I did it. I never regretted it.[5]

I absolutely insist that the French immersion programs should be continued. If I have children some day, I want them to be able to take advantage of this fantastic program. - Nicole Montpetit, Pickering, Ont.[6]

The trip was a big turning point in my consciousness about the program. Going over there [to New Brunswick] and speaking French brought us together. We found out what French can do for us. - Mike Baldry, Legal, Alta.[7]

The French immersion program is more than learning French: it's opening your mind, exposing yourself to different cultures and expanding your options. - Margaret Lilley, Sherwood Park, Alta.[8]

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In order to unite our country, I feel that we have to be able to associate and relate to one another.[5]

If you force something on someone, they are going to resent it, but if you expose it to them and if you teach them to appreciate it, I think it will really work.[5]

In a sense I think it has made me feel more Canadian. Since I can now speak in both official languages and communicate to both peoples, I feel that I am more able to understand their viewpoints, which is especially useful in this time of possible national fragmentation. - Jeff Embleton, Fredericton, N.B.[9]

I would like to tell people my own age that it is never too late to learn a second, third, or even fourth language. The results are worth the trouble. - Nicole Montpetit, Pickering, Ont.[6]

I took my undergraduate degree in New Brunswick, where I met a lot of Francophones with whom I could communicate. In the [law] firm where I work now, we have clients from Montreal, so it helps that I'm bilingual. - Catherine Poyen, Calgary, Alta.[10]

I followed the French immersion program throughout elementary and high school and I really feel that this helped me to learn Indonesian. - Megan Thomson, Charlottetown, P.E.I.[11]

It's more than conjugating verbs and learning vocabulary. It enables you to share and compare ideas with people you never otherwise would have known. ... That alone justifies the 11 years I have spent in the French immersion program. - Wai-ling Ho Ching, Coquitlam, B.C.[12]

Throughout the past five years, French has come in handy for me at the most surprising times. I feel a thrill whenever I can conquer a situation due to this and I feel proud to come from a country that recognizes it as an official language. I want to encourage these programs to continue so that we can continue to ignore international language boundaries. - Sheena Tieffel, Merritt, B.C.[12]

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Footnotes

[1] The results cited in these three paragraphs are very similar to a number of other studies. See, for example:

- *"Follow-up Study of French Immersion Graduates: Provincial Results (1987-88 and 1988-89 graduates)."* Manitoba Education and Training, 1991 (88% would recommend the program to others - page 22).
- "Senior Students and French - How Do They Rate Themselves?" W. Russ McGillivray. *More French, s'il vous plaît!* (80% recommended early immersion, 23% late immersion, and only 2% core French - page 89).
- *"FSL: Learning French Matters in Toronto Schools."* Toronto Board of Education and Canadian Parents for French - Toronto Chapter, 1993 (88% of the immersion students would make the same decision to enter the program again - page 22).

[2] "Immersion Outcomes: Beyond Language Proficiency." Alina MacFarlane and Marjorie Bingham Wesche. *Canadian Modern Language Review* 5(2), January 1995 (page 269).

[3] "Saskatchewan French Immersion: Can we expect a second generation?" R. Husum and R. Bryce. *CONTACT* 10(1), February 1991 (page 9).

[4] *CPF Alberta Newsletter*, summer 1992 (page 1).

[5] From *Two Languages, One Country*, a video produced by the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages (revised April 1992).

[6] *Language and Society* 47, fall 1994 (page 18).

[7] *CPF Alberta Newsletter* 37, winter 1992/93 (page 2).

[8] In an interview with the authors.

[9] *Language and Society* 47, fall 1994 (page 19).

[10] *CPF Alberta Newsletter* 35, summer 1992 (page 1).

[11] *CPF National News* 66, fall 1994 (page 3).

[12] *CPF National News* 67, winter 1995 (page 5).

A BRIEF HISTORY of FRENCH IMMERSION in ALBERTA

1850s ... first schools established in the area now known as Alberta, supported and operated under the auspices of the Catholic and Protestant churches; both English and French were used as languages of instruction

1875 ..... North West Act made provision for government support of education

1885 ..... a Board of Education was established, with two sections, one Catholic and one Protestant; French continued to be used as a language of instruction in some schools

1892 ..... Board of Education replaced by a Council of Public Instruction; the use of French in the schools of the Northwest Territories was abolished, but later permission was given for French-speaking students to study French in their schools for approximately one hour a day (grammar, reading, composition, and literature)

1901 ..... Council replaced by a Department of Education

1905 ..... Alberta became a province

1940s ... a few private institutions, such as Collège Saint-Jean and Académie Assomption in Edmonton, provide instruction in French for at least part of the day.

1950s ... School Act modified to permit instruction in French in the early primary grades, but learning resources for French language instruction were not recommended (that is, identified by the department)

1958 ..... first known immersion program begun in the English-language West Island School Commission in Quebec

1960s ... early in the decade, an ad hoc committee of the Curriculum Branch of Alberta Education was formed to prepare a language arts program in the French language designed for French-speaking pupils in the elementary grades

1965 ..... the best-known (because of the intensive monitoring and research) early experiment in immersion began in Saint Lambert (near Montreal)

1968, 1970 ... School Act changed to permit boards and private schools to offer instruction in French in grades 1-12

1969 ..... the Calgary Catholic School District began its first "bilingual" French program

1970 ..... first federal grants for "Bilingualism in Education"

1972 ..... the Edmonton Catholic School District established its secondary French program in École J. H. Picard (Collège Saint-Jean then became a post-secondary institution only)

1973 ..... the Calgary Public School District began its first early partial immersion program

1974 ..... the Edmonton Public School District began French immersion

1976..... Provincial regulations allow French to be used as the language of instruction up to a maximum of 80% of the school day from grades 3 through 12.

1977 ..... Canadian Parents for French (CPF) was founded

1978 ..... the Alberta Branch of CPF was incorporated

1978..... the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education is established

1983 ..... the province began to keep separate enrolment statistics for French first language (FFL) and French immersion programs

1984... the establishment of the first Alberta schools designated as "French first language" (i.e., for Francophones only)

1987 ..... Alberta Education developed a separate French language arts curriculum for immersion students

1988 ..... School Act changed to recognize the rights of Francophones under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms to have their children educated in French—reference to immersion comes under a new section of the act for "alternative programs"

French Opportunities and Resources

There are simply too many possibilities to list in this publication. Prices and addresses change. Some are discontinued, and new ones are always appearing. However, every effort has been made to include those well-established opportunities and resources which are of particular relevance to early French immersion students. If you are aware of any that have been missed, please advise the Language Services Branch of Alberta Education.

The following information does not constitute a recommendation by Alberta Education.

Audio and video tapes, CDs, and films

Among the many who have produced audio and video materials especially for French immersion students are:

- CARMEN CAMPAGNE
- CHARLOTTE DIAMOND
- KAETZ AND GLOVER
- MATT MAXWELL
- SUZANNE PINEL (Marie-Soleil).
- JACQUES CHAUVIN
- JACQUES DUCHESNEAU (Jacquot)
- ALEX MAHÉ (The Goodtime Train)
- MARILYN PERINGER (storyteller)

Check your local library, book stores (see "Books" below), educational children's stores, and video rental outlets, or see the list below.

Sara Jordan, teacher and French immersion mom, has produced several entertaining audio tapes and accompanying lyric and activity books to help children learn multiplication and reading skills, French vocabulary, the French alphabet, and much more. They are available at many educational children's stores and book stores. For a free catalog contact JORDAN MUSIC PRODUCTIONS INC., Box 160, Station M, Toronto ON M6S 4T3, phone: 1-800-567-7733 or (416) 760-7664, fax: (416) 762-2770.

The OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES has produced an animated 10-minute video for 5- to 7-year olds. *The Magic Mural*, or *Le mur magique*, shows that people can get along and do things together even if they do not understand one another's language. *Two Languages, One Country* (*Deux langues, un pays*) is suitable for junior high or older audiences. It uses an animated, humorous map of Canada to tell the story of Canada's official languages. Both are accompanied by study guides. To borrow a copy for your child's school or youth group, see page 134. Copying of these videos is encouraged.

There are many other distributors which will provide catalogues of their French audio and/or video recordings, including:

DIFFUSION FRANCO 1546, promenade Blohm Ottawa ON K1G 4P9 Phone: (613) 737-5418 Fax: (613) 737-9727	Offers a selection of videos in French.
GOODTIME TRAIN ENTERPRISE 39 Dayton Cres. St.Albert AB T8N 4X5 Phone/Fax: (403) 460-9528	Offers recordings by Alex Mahé.
HUG BUG MUSIC INC. 6251 Chatsworth Rd. Richmond BC V7C 3S4 Phone: (604) 274-8216 Fax: (604) 274-8210	Handles recordings by Charlotte Diamond; suitable for preschool and grades k-4.
LA CHÈVRE ENTERPRISES Hornby Island BC V0R 1Z0 Phone: (604) 335-2042 Fax: (614) 335-1575 davka@comox.island.net	Stories and music on tape by Anne Glover and David Kaetz; suitable for children in grades 1-4.
LE GROUPE MULTIMÉDIA DU CANADA 5225 Berri Montreal QC H2J 2S4 Phone: (514) 273-4251 Fax: (514) 276-5130	*Livre Ouvert*, a 75-title collection of videos in French, based on some of the world's best children's books. For children 4-10 years old.
LES EDITIONS CLOWN SAMUEL INC. C.P. Box 506 Orleans ON K1C 1S9 Phone: (613) 723-2522 Fax: (613) 745-2871	Suzanne Pinel (Marie-Soleil) offers three video cassettes and a selection of audio recordings suitable for preschool and kindergarten children.
LES FILMS CRITERION 7810, rue Jarry Anjou QC H1C 2A1 Phone: 1-800-361-2788 Fax: (514) 932-8472	Distributes French versions of feature-length " Hollywood" films for public viewing.

McNABB & CONNOLLY 464 McNicholl Ave. Willowdale ON M2H 2E1 Phone: (416) 497-1819 Fax: (416) 490-0601	Offers a collection of animated children's videos in French intended mainly for library or school audiences.
MUFFIN RECORDS 238 Davenport Road, #348 Toronto ON M5R 1J6 Phone: 1-800-668-6288 or (416) 947-1444	Handles recordings by Matt Maxwell.
MUSIQUE ÉDITIONS-JACQUOT Box 64 Clarksburg ON N0H 1J0 Phone: 1-800-461-3644 or (519) 599-3030	Has produced audio cassettes and one video suitable for immersion students in grades k-4.
NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA Video & Film Service - Rentals & Purchases 179 Rideau St. Ottawa ON K1A 0M9 Phone: 1-800-267-7710 or (613) 996-4861 Fax: (613) 943-0123	Offers thousands of video and film titles, some of which are specifically designed for French second language students.
PERIODICA INC. Case Postale 444 Outremont QC H2V 4R6 Phone: 1-800-361-1431 or (514) 274-5468 Fax: (514) 274-0201	Offers video tapes and audio recordings on a wide range of topics.
RADIO QUÉBEC Direction de la télévision éducative formelle Services aux écoles 1000, rue Fullum, 6^e étage Montréal QC H2K 3L7 Phone: (514) 521-2424, ext.4212/4213 Fax: (514) 873-7464	*L'Aventure de l'écriture*, an animated series focussing on written French, and other educational titles.
SOCIÉTÉ RADIO-CANADA TV Programs Sales & Licensing C.P. 6000, Succ. A Montreal QC H3C 3A8 Phone: (514) 597-7825 Fax: (514) 597-7862	Offers a wide selection of educational videos in French.

TVONTARIO
Customer Service
Box 200, Station Q
Toronto ON M4T 2T1
Phone: 1-800-463-6886 or (416) 463-6886
Fax: (416) 484-4425

Educational and not-for-profit institutions may rent videotaped programs through the Videotape Program Service. Adults interested in learning French may purchase the *French in Action I* and *II* series.

Books

The two French bookstores in Alberta also carry audio and video tapes, CDs, games, magazines, and greeting cards. Their staff are always willing to help non-francophone parents find items suitable for their children.

LIBRAIRIE LE CARREFOUR
8927D Whyte (82) Ave.
Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2
Phone: (403) 466-1556

BOOKSTORE LA RUELLE
Upstairs, 817 - 17 Ave. S.W.
Calgary AB T2T 0A1
Phone: (403) 244-6433

Classrooms across Canada participate in the Scholastic book clubs. Children in grades k-3 order books from the monthly *Arc-en-ciel* flyers sent to the teacher (the flyers kindly include brief English descriptions of the books). The program for grades 4-6 is called *Clic!* For more information contact SCHOLASTIC-TAB PUBLICATIONS Ltd., 123 Newkirk Road, Richmond Hill ON L4C 3G5, phone: 1-800-625-8583.

Some schools or parent groups organize BOOK FAIRS at which parents and their children, perhaps with the assistance of teachers, can purchase materials (it's often done in conjunction with a special event or Open House). Distributors offer discounts depending on the volume of sales, allowing the class or school to use the profits to add materials for its library. In addition to the stores listed above, your school librarian may have some good contacts.

Camps

Throughout Alberta, organizations like Canadian Parents for French and francophone associations sponsor camps for students. There are SUMMER DAY CAMPS for elementary children, CYCLING TRIPS, and even summer FAMILY CAMPS. For more information contact CPF (see page 133) and the ACFA (see "Clubs" below).

School-year and summer residential camp programs are offered at the CENTRE DE PLEIN AIR LUSSON on Lake Wakamao (73 km north of Edmonton). For more information contact ACFA Régionale d'Edmonton, 8925, 82^{e} avenue, pièce 100, Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2, phone: (403) 469-4401, fax: (403) 469-3997.

Here are just a few of the best known residential summer camps in Quebec which specialize in programs for non-francophone children:

BEAUVALLON VACANCES
INTERNATIONAL
286 Rang de l'Église
Henryville QC J0J 1E0
Phone: (514) 299-2506
Fax: (514) 299-2383

CAMP ÉCOLE KÉNO
2315, chemin Saint-Louis
Sillery QC G1T 1R5
Phone: (418) 658-4198

CENTRE NATIQUE DE L'ISTORLET
C.P. 249, Havre-Aubert
Îles-de-la-Madeleine QC
G0B 1J0
Phone: (418) 937-5266

CAMP DE VACANCES
LA PERDRIÈRE
Collège de Bois-de-Boulogne
10,555 avenue Bois-de-Boulogne
Montréal QC H4N 1L4
Phone: (514) 332-3044
Fax: (514) 332-3235

CAMP TROIS-SAUMONS
CAMP MINOGAMI
11, rue Crémazie Est
Québec QC G1R 1Y1
Phone: (418) 529-5323
Fax: (418) 529-1155

CAMP OUAREAU
(girls aged 8 to 15)
29 Summer St.
Lennoxville QC J1M 1G4
Phone: (819) 562-9641

PERSPECTIVES EDUSCHO (activities in the Laurentians)
131 Dunlop Cres.
P.O. Box 337
Russell ON K4R 1E3
Phone: (613) 445-3682
Fax: (613) 445-2682

More information on QUEBEC CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY CAMPS is available from Lois Thomas, 74 Chestnut Park Rd., Toronto ON M4W 1W9, phone: (416) 925-5778 for the price of her annual booklet. Another source is the QUEBEC CAMPING ASSOCIATION, P.O. Box 1000, Station M, Montreal QC H1V 3R2, phone: (514) 252-3113. See also the *FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS* booklet published by the Quebec Branch of Canadian Parents for French.

Canadian Parents for French has information on HOW TO ORGANIZE a local summer French camp. Contact the CPF Alberta office (see page 133).

Clubs

Contact your nearest branch of the Alberta francophone association to learn about French clubs and organizations in your area. For example, cubs/scouts and brownies/guides are often available in French. The provincial offices are at:

ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE-
FRANÇAISE DE L'ALBERTA (ACFA)
8923, 82^{e} avenue, pièce 200
Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2
Phone: (403) 466-1680
Fax: (403) 465-6773

FRANCOPHONIE JEUNESSE DE
L'ALBERTA *(the youth organization)*
8925, 82^{e} avenue, pièce 200
Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2
Phone: (403) 469-1344
Fax: (403) 469-4799

Computers

The INTERNET is multilingual. For example, a French news summary for students is available via FROGNET. The address is frog@guvax.georgetown.edu. For more information, phone Data Based Edutrends at (705) 739-4614. Another good place to start is Canadiana - La page des ressources canadiennes. This provides a good link for secondary students to many information sources in French.

Already some Canadian schools are using the Internet to link French immersion students in different parts of the country, providing them with opportunities to use their second language for meaningful communication with their peers. For example, SCHOOLNET is a cooperative initiative of Canada's provincial, territorial, and federal governments, educators, universities and colleges, and industry. It aims to link all of Canada's 16,000+ schools to the electronic highway. SchoolNet accounts are not provided to students but to principals and teachers. Access the French services by gophering to schoolnet.carleton.ca 415 (or 416). For more information contact the National SchoolNet Office, Industry Canada, 235 Queen St., Room 801F, Ottawa ON K1A 0H5, phone: 1-800-268-6608, fax: (613) 998-0943, schoolnet@istc.ca.

There is also a national electronic mail list for teachers, teacher trainers, administrators, and researchers to exchange ideas or opinions on immersion teaching at all levels. IMMERSION-FR discussions are conducted in both French and English. To subscribe contact majordomo@sfu.ca.

Contests

The ALBERTA CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC AWARDS (ACLA) take place each spring. This event brings together students of French and other languages to recite poems, read and answer questions about passages of text, conduct interviews, give short speeches, and present readers' theatres. Although each performance is rated by judges, ACLA is not a competition, but an open event. For more information, contact the Modern Language Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

BILINGUAL DEBATES take place under the auspices of the Alberta Debate and Speech Association. For more information, contact their offices in Edmonton at #167 - 6310 Wagner Rd., Edmonton AB T6E 4N5, phone: (403) 440-6988, fax: (403) 463-3648.

LA DICTÉE P.G.L. is an international contest inviting elementary francophone and immersion students to improve their knowledge of French. Teachers should write for class kits to La Dictée P.G.L., Foundation Paul Gérin-Lajoie, 449, rue Ste-Hélène, 2^e étage, Montréal QC H2Y 2K9, phone: 1-800-363-2687, fax: (514) 288-4880.

LE CONCOURS D'ART ORATOIRE is a public speaking competition organized and sponsored by Canadian Parents for French. For more information, contact the Alberta provincial office (see page 133).

SCIENCE FAIRS: The University of Alberta's Faculté Saint-Jean organizes an annual Exposciences for immersion and francophone students throughout the province (see page 125) for the address). For several years, the Calgary Chapter of Canadian Parents for French has sponsored a "French section" of the Calgary Youth Science Fair (contact the chapter for more information).

WRITE IT UP!/À VOS CRAYONS! is an annual competition sponsored by the Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers (ACPI/CAIT), the Canadian Association of Second Language Teachers (CASLT), Canadian Parents for French (CPF), the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC), La Société pour la promotion de l'enseignement de l'anglais langue seconde au Québec (SPEAQ), and the Department of Canadian Heritage. The objective is have young people think about the official languages issue in Canada and to obtain their thoughts and ideas on the subject. Children aged 10-13 are given a different theme and task each year, and winners are chosen from across Canada. Details are circulated to schools each winter (Nov.-Jan.) via these organizations' newsletters. Deadline for entries is in April.

Cultural events

LA FESTIVAL DE LA CABANE AU SUCRE ("sugaring-off party") is celebrated in early spring in many Alberta communities. For more information, contact your nearest ACFA branch (see page 121) or local Canadian Parents for French chapter (see page 133).

LA FÊTE FRANCO-ALBERTAINE takes place each year around Canada Day. For more information on this celebration of the French culture in Alberta, contact your nearest ACFA branch (see page 121).

Dance

Take folk dance lessons in French, or just enjoy the entertainment!

L'ASSOCIATION LA GIRANDOLE
#14 - 8925 - 82 Ave.
Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2
Phone: (403) 468-0057

LES GIGUEURS DE CALGARY
c/o Marguerite Dodds-Bélanger
5324 - 32 Ave. NW
Calgary AB T3B 0J6
Phone: (403) 247-9170

LES BLÉS D'OR
Box 3078
St. Paul AB T0A 3A0
Phone: (403) 465-4410

Entertainers

There are just too many to list! L'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta publishes a *RÉPERTOIRE DES RESSOURCES ARTISTIQUES ET CULTURELLES DE L'ALBERTA FRANCOPHONE*. This booklet lists the names, addresses, and phone numbers of both amateur and professional dancers, musicians, painters, actors, and artisans. Each listing also indicates the individual's or group's specific area(s) of interest or expertise. To obtain a copy, contact the ACFA provincial office (see page 121).

Entertainers from within and outside Alberta (including those listed under "Audio and video tapes") often send information on their performances and upcoming tours directly to immersion schools and to Canadian Parents for French. In addition to those listed on page 116, the following specialize in performances for immersion students:

JACQUES CHAUVIN
c/o Boxer Productions
622A Edmonton Trail N.E.
Calgary AB T2E 3J4
Phone: (403) 230-0331
Fax: (403) 277-6332

music and stories suitable for elementary and junior high

GILBERT PARENT
4228 - 89 St.
Edmonton AB T6K 1B9
Phone: (403) 450-4051
Fax: (403) 450-4047

(LES BÛCHERONS - The Lumberjacks)
traditional music, dance, folklore

MARC TARDIF
4036 des Cèdres
Cap-Rouge QC G1Y 3T5
Phone: (418) 563-6498
Fax: (418) 652-8326

magician-comedian; performances based on scientific facts and the francophone culture

DAVID THIAW
c/o Louise Poole
421 - 13 St. N.W.
Calgary AB T2N 1Z3
Phone: (403) 270-7871

with the group DOMBA;
Senegalese drummer and story teller will give workshops to students as well as performances

French courses near home

Many school board, college and university continuing education departments (as well as their credit departments) offer French language courses at various levels, from beginning to advanced. Some school boards include special "French for immersion parents" courses. For more information, see the booklet *WHERE TO LEARN ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN CANADA*.

If there's sufficient interest in your school or community, a parent group could hire a teacher and organize its own evening courses.

DISTANCE EDUCATION courses are offered by Athabasca University for both personal interest and academic credit. For more information call 263-6465 in Calgary, 421-8700 in Edmonton, 743-1846 in Fort McMurray, or the Office of the Registrar, Box 10,000, Athabasca AB T0G 2R0, phone: (403) 675-6174. A booklet outlining other distance education programs is available from Réseau d'enseignement francophone à distance, 1001, rue Sherbrooke est, pièce 1840, Case postale 5250, Succ. C, Montréal QC H2X 3M4, phone: (514) 523-3143, fax: (514) 525-7763.

The non-profit association ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE has offices in most major cities. It offers courses at all levels in a variety of formats, often including Saturday classes for children.

Look in your telephone directory YELLOW PAGES under Schools-Language or Schools-Private. (Beware promises that seem too good to be true: a language is a large and complex body of knowledge that cannot be acquired "by magic.")

Films

- see "Audio and video tapes, CDs, and films"

Games

Because of the Canadian francophone market, many well-known games and toys are available in French, such as Speak 'n' Spell, Monopoly, Careers, and many more. Ask at your local toy store or check in retail catalogues.

Live, study, and/or work in a francophone environment

Many French immersion graduates as well as francophone students in Alberta attend FACULTÉ SAINT-JEAN, an all-French faculty of the University of Alberta. For information, write or visit 8406, rue Marie-Anne Gaboury (91 St.) Edmonton AB T6C 4G9, phone: (403) 465-8700, fax: (403) 465-8760. See their homepage http://gpu.srv.ualberta.ca/~eblackbu/sj-fra.htm.

In addition to the universities and colleges in Québec, there are francophone post-secondary institutions in a number of other provinces. Some also offer programs especially for non-francophone students. For more information, see the booklets *WHERE TO LEARN ENGLISH AND FRENCH IN CANADA* and *TES OPTIONS POSTSECONDAIRES.*

Through the CANADIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENT EXCHANGE CONSORTIUM, students have the opportunity to take one year of post-secondary education at a university in another province. Information is available through department offices at participating universities.

Following are the best-known programs for secondary and post-secondary students. Many others are listed in the free booklet, *EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADIANS.*

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE MONITOR PROGRAM Post-Secondary Programs Branch Alberta Advanced Education and Career Development 11th Floor, Commerce Place 10155 - 102 St. Edmonton AB T5J 4L5 Phone: (403) 427-5538 Fax: (403) 427-4185	Part-time program: post-secondary students attend an educational institution and work 8 hours/week in schools in another province. Full-time program : post-secondary students work 25 hours/week in another province.
SUMMER LANGUAGE BURSARY PROGRAM same contact as for the Official Language Monitor Program (above)	Post-secondary students can obtain financial assistance to attend summer programs in their second official language. Names of qualifying institutions are also available from this address.

FELLOWSHIP FOR FULL-TIME STUDIES IN FRENCH (UNIVERSITY) same contact as for the Official Language Monitor Program (above)	Financial assistance to pursue post-secondary studies in French in any discipline in Canada.
SUMMER STUDENT JOB EXCHANGE PROGRAM 2700, boul. Laurier, 3ᵉ étage Sainte-Foy QC G1V 2L8 Phone: (418) 646-6124, 1-800-463-2355 Fax: (418) 643-7901	Work in a government office matching your post-secondary field of study.
STUDENT WORK ABROAD PROGRAM Travel CUTS - SWAP France 187 College St. Toronto ON M5T 1P7 Phone: (416) 979-2406 Fax: (416) 979-8167	Earn money abroad while practising and improving your French.
ALBERTA/QUEBEC SIX-MONTH STUDENT EXCHANGE Assistant Director, National and International Education 11160 Jasper Ave., 10th floor, West Tower Edmonton AB T5K 0L2 Phone: (403) 427-2035 Fax: (403) 422-3014	A reciprocal school-year exchange open to all Alberta secondary students studying French. Grade 10 students should ask their French teachers for application forms.
SOCIETY FOR EDUCATIONAL VISITS AND EXCHANGES IN CANADA (SEVEC) 57 Auriga Drive, Suite 201 Nepean ON K2E 8B2 Phone: 1-800-387-3832 or (613) 998-3760 Fax: (613) 998-7094 sevec@hookup.net Internet: www.sevec.ca.	Educational visits for groups of students, school year group exchanges, summer individual exchanges, video exchanges, adult exchanges (for educators), and other programs.
AFS INTERCULTURE CANADA 1231 St. Catherine St. W., Suite 505 Montreal QC H3G 1P5 Phone: 1-800-361-7248 or (514) 288-3282 Fax: 1-800-361-1879 or (514) 843-9119	Academic year, semester, and summer programs in 30 different countries and Quebec for 15- to 18-year olds. Also opportunities for families to host exchange students.

NACEL 8925 - 82 Ave. Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2 Phone: (403) 468-0941 Fax: (403) 465-7583	International experiences, including an au c/o Yves Paradis pair program, homestay in France, and hosting opportunities.
CANADIAN CROSSROADS INTERNATIONAL 31 Madison Ave. Toronto ON M5R 2S2 Phone: (416) 967-0801 Fax: (416) 967-9078	Work in a developing country.

Magazines and newspapers

There are French magazines for every age and interest. Here are just a few:

*POMME D'API**	ages 3 and up
*COULICOU**	the French equivalent of *Chickadee*, a science and nature magazine for children up to age 8
*HIBOU**	the French equivalent of *Owl*, a science and nature magazine for ages 8 to 14 *10 per year; published by Les Éditions Héritage Inc.
LES DÉBROUILLARDS	science, technology, and nature with a light-hearted approach for ages 9-14; 10 issues per year
J'AIME LIRE the above are available from: 25, boul. Taschereau, bureau 201 Greenfield Park QC J4V 3P1 Phone: (514) 875-4444 1-800-667-4444 (French service only) Fax: (514) 923-0864	stories, comics, and educational games for ages 7-12; 10 issues per year
RAYON-JEUNESSE 1645 - 5 Ave. Vancouver BC V6J 1N5 Phone: (604) 730-9575 Fax: (604) 730-9576	newsprint magazine suitable for young people from 13 to 19; 10 issues per year; discounts on group subscriptions

SÉLECTION DU READERS' DIGEST 215, avenue Redfern Westmount QC H3Z 2V9	the French version, suitable for grades 9 and up
QUÉBEC SCIENCE Case postale 250 Sillery QC G1T 2R1	science magazine suitable for grades 9 and up
LE JOURNAL DES JEUNES Comptoir postal Marion C.P. 47007 Saint-Boniface MB R2H 3G9 Phone: (204) 237-4823 Fax: (204) 231-1998	a twice-monthly current affairs bulletin for teens; an accompanying "Info Quiz" on diskette or in paper format is also available
CIEL INFO National Museum of Science & Technology P.O. Box 9724 Ottawa ON K1G 5A3 Phone: 1-800-267-3999	a free quarterly magazine for astronomy buffs of all ages
L'ACTUALITÉ	current affairs and news magazine similar to *Macleans* suitable for older teens and adults
CHÂTELAÎNE the above are available from: 1001, boul. de Maisonneuve ouest C.P. 848, Succ. B Montréal QC H3B 3K5 Phone: 1-800-361-6670 or (514) 843-2552 Fax: (514) 845-4393	lifestyle and general interest magazine suitable for older teens and adults

There are also French or bilingual magazines on topics from art to consumerism to skiing—and much more. Look in your library for or write away for *CANADIAN MAGAZINES FOR EVERYONE*, c/o Canadian Magazine Publisher's Association, 2 Stewart St., Toronto ON M5V 1H6, phone: (416) 362-2546, fax: (416) 362-2547.

PERIODICA INC. is a subscription service for French-language publications. Write to 1155, rue Ducharme, Case postale 444, Outremont QC H2V 4R6, phone: 1-800-361-1431, fax: (514) 274-0201.

The two French newspapers published in Alberta are:

LE FRANCO (provincial in scope)
8923, 82^e avenue
Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2
Phone: (403) 465-6581
Fax: (403) 465-6773

LE CHINOOK
4 Hunterhorn Rd. N.E.
Calgary AB T2K 6E8
Phone: (403) 274-7320
Fax: (403) 274-9821

Pen pals

A VIDEO EXCHANGE project has been organized by the Society for Educational Visits and Exchanges in Canada (SEVEC) and Canadian Parents for French. Classes of French second language students are twinned with classes of francophone students in another part of the country and given suggestions for preparing video presentations to be exchanged. Contact SEVEC at 1-800-38-SEVEC or (613) 998-3760, fax: (613) 998-7094, email: sevec@hookup.net for more information.

For more traditional pen pals, try:

CANADIAN PEN FRIENDS
(twins school classes)
Program Officer, State Ceremonial
Department of Canadian Heritage
Ottawa ON K1A 0M5
Phone: (819) 953-5991
Fax: (819) 997-8777

MINISTÈRE DU LOISIR, DE LA CHASSE, ET DE LA PÊCHE
Secrétariat des échanges socioculturels
Bureau de correspondance du Québec
150, boul. St.Cyrille est
Québec QC G1R 4Y1

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH SERVICES
P.B. 125
SF-20101
Turku 10, Finland

FRANCANADA
17, rue de Vauluisant
10 000 Troyes
France

Posters

The Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages has produced several bilingual posters which are available free of charge: "Feathered Friends" (gives the English and French names of a variety of North American birds), "Owls Hoot" (shows birds and animals and describes the sound each makes), "Canada Goose" (shows young Canadians up to 9 years old that federal government services are avaiable in both official languages), and "English and French...in Almost Half the Countries of the World" (gives the countries and their flags). See page 134.

Other sources of French posters include POSTER PALS, Box 487, Smithville ON L0R 2A0, phone: (416) 957-7696 and ÉDITIONS SOLEIL, P.O. Box 847, Welland ON L3B 5Y5, phone: (416) 788-2674.

Software

For catalogues of French software write to:

AQUOPS
Room 530
7400 Saint Laurent Blvd.
Montréal QC H2R 2Y1

CFORP
290, rue Dupuis
Vanier ON K1L 1A2
Phone: (613) 747-8000

CRAPO LOGICIELS
3117A, rue Hochelaga
Montréal QC H1W 1G3
Phone: (514) 528-8791
Fax: (514) 528-1770

DIL INTERNATIONAL
2115 Boivin
Sainte-Foy QC G1V 1N6

MARC ROUTHIER
3431, rue de la Dauversière
Sainte-Foy QC G1X 2H6
Phone: (418) 653-3705

SOFTWARE PLUS
1 - 12760 Bathgate Way
Richmond BC V6V 1Z4

SUNBURST/WINGS
920 Mercer St.
Windsor ON   N9A 7C2
Phone: 1-800-321-7511

CATALOGUE DES LOGICIELS
Direction des ressources didactiques
600, rue Fullum, 8e étage
Montréal QC H2K 4L1
Phone: (514) 873-7678

CLASS SOFTWARE
39 Groveland Bay
Winnipeg MB R3T 5B7
Phone: (204) 275-6621

DIFFUSION FRANCO
1546, promenade Blohm
Ottawa ON K1G 4P9
Phone: (613) 737-5418
Fax: (613) 737-9727

LE GROUPE MICRO-INTEL
3155 Hochelaga, 2e étage
Montréal QC H1W 1G4
Phone: (514) 528-1905

RESSOURCES CAMLI
365 Crestview Ave.
Ottawa ON K1H 5G7
Phone: (613) 738-7576

SCHOOL SERVICES OF CANADA
66 Portland St.
Toronto ON M5V 2M8

TRALCO EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
297 Brucedale Ave. E.
Hamilton ON L9A 1R2
Phone: (905) 575-5717
Fax: (905) 575-1783

Television and radio

In addition to the CBC French-language television and radio stations, the new French cable news service (RDI) may be of interest to older students. Many cable subscribers can also watch TV5, the international French-language service. Don't forget to check the Access TV schedule for French programs.

TV-HEBDO, the French equivalent of *TV Guide*, can be obtained from Services des abonnements, Case postale 6411, succ. A, Montréal QC H3C 4N2.

Theatre

LA SOCIÉTÉ DE THÉÂTRE DE CALGARY
605, 1re rue sud-ouest
3e étage, pièce 375
Calgary AB T2P 3S9
Phone: (403) 269-5583

LES CITOYENS DE SAINT-ALBERT
Case postale 147
Saint-Albert AB T8N 1N3
Phone: (403) 459-6070

There are also a number of theatre troupes which tour the province, performing for school as well as public audiences. Among these are Alberta's:

LA SOCIÉTÉ CULTURELLE DE MAMOWAPIK
8711, 82e avenue
Edmonton AB T6C 0Y7
Phone: (403) 468-6747
Fax: (403) 468-1599

L'UNITHÉÂTRE
8527, rue Marie-Anne Gaboury
Edmonton AB T6C 3N1
Phone: (403) 469-7193
Fax: (403) 469-9590

Travel and tourism

ALBERTA TOURISM
10155 - 102 St.
Edmonton AB T5J 4L6
Phone: (403) 427-2280
Fax: (403) 427-1529

TOURISME QUÉBEC
Case postale 20 000
Québec QC G1K 7X2
Phone: (418) 643-2230
Fax: (418) 643-3126

Videos - see "Audio and video tapes, CDs, and films"

Miscellaneous

CANADA SCHOLARSHIPS ON-LINE is a service sponsored by Stentor Inc. Search via the SchoolNet (see "Computers") for all undergraduate scholarships available within Canada, including those for students learning French. (see also "Live, study, and/or work...")

CLIPS is a bilingual bulletin published from time to time by the Department of Canadian Heritage to provide information on federal government activities related to the field of education. It is available free for classroom use from the Research and Information on Education Directorate, Education Support Sector, Department of Canadian Heritage, Ottawa ON K1A 0M5, phone: (819) 994-5673.

OPEN HOUSE CANADA provides funding to national non-profit organizations which administer reciprocal group exchange programs and national forums for Canadian youth aged 14-19. The objective of the program is to provide learning opportunities for young Canadians to increase their knowledge, appreciation, and respect for the diversity of Canadian society and its institutions. The funds are used to cover part of the transportation costs. For further information, contact Open House Canada, 15 Eddy St., 7th floor, Hull QC K1A 0M5, phone: (819) 994-1315.

The PARLIAMENTARY GUIDE PROGRAM employs bilingual full-time university students during the period from Victoria Day to Labour Day. The guides welcome and provide tours to visitors to the national legislature. For more information, contact your university campus student placement centre or your Member of Parliament's local constituency office.

The PARLIAMENTARY PAGE PROGRAM contracts bilingual high school graduates to work a minimum of 15 hours a week for one year while attending university in the Ottawa area. An academic average of at least 80% and excellent language skills are prerequisites. Application forms and further information are available from high school guidance counsellors, and are due by the end of November. Parliamentary Page Programme (Recruitment), Human Resources Directorate, House of Commons, Room 538, Wellington Bldg., Ottawa ON K1A 0A6, phone: (613) 996-0897.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Canadian Parents for French newsletters.

Keeping up your skills - and more - in French.

Le Répertoire de la vie française en Amérique.

You can take it with you: Helping students maintain foreign language skills beyond the classroom.

For More INFORMATION

SPEAKERS, WORKSHOPS, CONFERENCES

Many schools and school boards hold information nights for parents with guest speakers on a variety of topics to do with education. Where an immersion program is offered, there are often additional meetings regarding aspects of second language learning. These are excellent opportunities not only to hear experts but also to ask them your questions. Watch school newsletters, special notices, and local newspapers for announcements of these events, or contact your school or school board office.

Support groups for parents interested in French second language education also organize information meetings, seminars, and conferences. If there is such an organization in your community, your school should be able to give you the name and phone number of a contact person.

The nationwide volunteer association Canadian Parents for French (CPF) was founded in 1977 to promote effective French second-language learning opportunities. It provides information through national, provincial, and local newsletters, pamphlets, books, speakers, workshops, and conferences. To learn about your nearest CPF chapter, contact:

CPF - ALBERTA BRANCH
Box 30036 Chinook Postal Outlet
Calgary AB T2H 2V8
Phone: (403) 262-5187
Fax: (402) 265-0194
cpfalta@cadvison.com

CANADIAN PARENTS FOR FRENCH
309 Cooper St., Suite 210
Ottawa ON K2P 0G5
Phone: (613) 235-1481
Fax: (613) 230-5940

Francophone parents can obtain information about French first language programs from:

LA FÉDÉRATION DES PARENTS FRANCOPHONES DE L'ALBERTA (FPFA)
#205 - 8925 - 82 Ave.
Edmonton AB T6C 0Z2
Phone: (403) 468-6934
Fax: (403) 469-4799

Information about French programs offered in Alberta schools is also available from:

LANGUAGE SERVICES BRANCH/DIRECTION DE L'ÉDUCATION FRANÇAISE
ALBERTA EDUCATION
11160 Jasper Ave., Box 40
Edmonton AB T5K 0L2
Phone: (403) 427-2940
Fax: (403) 422-1947

Other good sources of information about education are:

ALBERTA HOME AND SCHOOLS
COUNCIL ASSOCIATION
#607 - 11010 - 142 St.
Edmonton AB T5N 2R1
Phone: (403) 454-9867, 1-800-661-3470
Fax: (403) 455-0167

CANADIAN HOME AND SCHOOL AND
PARENT TEACHER FEDERATION
331 Somerset St. W.
Ottawa ON K2P 0J8

LEARNING DISABILITIES ASSOCIATION
OF ALBERTA
11343 - 61 Ave.
Edmonton AB T6H 1M3
Phone: (403) 448-0360

ASSOCIATION FOR BRIGHT CHILDREN
#1260 - 6240 - 113 St.
Edmonton AB T6H 3L2
Phone: (403) 438-1340

For information about bilingualism in Canada and the Official Languages Act, contact:

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Regional Office
#620 - 10055 - 106 St.
Edmonton AB T5J 2Y2
Phone: 1-800-661-3642, (403) 495-3111
Fax: (403) 495-4094

Communications Branch
110 O'Connor St.
Ottawa ON K1A 0T8
Phone: (613) 995-0730
Fax: (613) 995-0729

DEPARTMENT OF CANADIAN HERITAGE
Ottawa ON K1A 0M5
Phone: (819) 997-0055

Educational resources published and sold by Alberta Education may be ordered from:

LEARNING RESOURCES DISTRIBUTING CENTRE (LRDC)
12360 - 142 St.
Edmonton AB T5L 4X9
Phone: (403) 427-5775
Fax: (403) 422-9750

FURTHER READING FOR PARENTS (AND STUDENTS)

Available through your child's school

Many schools have a parents' resource centre in a section of the library or a parents' workroom. If yours doesn't, consider helping your school undertake such a project. It should include books, videos, periodicals and newsletters about various aspects of education, parenting, and student issues (such as substance abuse, children's health, sexuality). While developing your collection, don't forget humour!

Alberta Education has published some booklets which should be available through your school:

French Language Arts: What Every Parent Should Know, 1989 - $19.55 for 20 copies from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre (#190629).

Language Learning for French Immersion Students in the Transition Year: Information for Parents, 1992 - a 16-page booklet explaining how English language arts is introduced to children who were first taught to read and write in French. $15.20 for 20 copies from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre (#190786).

Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms in the Transition Year: Information for School Administrators, 1992 - while not of interest to every parent, this would be a good addition to your school parents' library. $2.80 each from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre (#190794).

Language Learning in French Immersion Classrooms in the Transition Year: Information for Language Learning Teachers, 1992 - while not of interest to every parent, this would be a good addition to your school parents' library. $3.55 each from the Learning Resources Distributing Centre (# 190801).

Parents Ask about Language Learning, 1991 - a joint project of Alberta Education and the University of Alberta, this booklet is an excellent introduction to children's literacy development. Although it deals only with English language arts within the regular school program, it will definitely be of interest to parents of immersion students. It was never published but rather distributed to schools throughout the province with authority to reproduce it on a non-profit basis.

Other items of interest include:

Pamphlets published for parents by the Alberta Teachers' Association which cover a wide range of topics from *A Child's Self-Esteem* through *Learning to Read is Hard Work* to *Vandalism*. A sample set (#PG18) is free from 11010 - 142 St., Edmonton AB T5N 2R1. For current prices on bulk orders, call the order desk at 1-800-232-7208, 453-2411 in Edmonton.

Pamphlets and other materials published by the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada. Write to the L.D.A.C., 323 Chapel St., Suite 200, Ottawa ON K1N 7Z2 or phone (613) 238-5721 for a list of publications.

Through libraries

Many of the books listed on the following pages may be available through your public library. Try these subject listings to find more:

Education
Education - bilingual
French language - study and teaching
Learning - psychology of
Self help
Study skills

For those who wish to review more detailed articles about teaching, learning, and French immersion, university libraries hold a wealth of information. In addition to the main library, the Faculty of Education might have its own collection. If you don't have borrowing privileges, you can always do your reading in the library, or pay for photocopies of particular articles (don't forget to bring a handful of change). Here are a few ideas to get you started:

The Canadian Modern Language Review - this quarterly periodical for educators and researchers publishes articles on French as a second language, English as a second language, and other foreign languages at all levels of instruction.

CONTACT - a quarterly Canadian review for French teachers.

French Immersion: Process, Product & Perspectives - a compilation of articles from the *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, edited by Sally Rehorick and Viviane Edwards, 1992. Topics include human resources, language acquisition, immersion students with special needs, policies and classroom practice, tests, and future trends.

Books, pamphlets, and periodicals to order

Following are the documents consulted by the authors which are of particular interest to parents and/or students.

"A Parent's View of French Immersion." Susan Purdy. Canadian Parents for French, 1988 - pamphlet available for $1.00 from CPF (see page 133) (bulk prices on request).

"Are Parents' Expectations of French Immersion Realistic?" W. R. McGillivray. Canadian Parents for French, 1984 - pamphlet available for $1.00 from CPF (see page 133) (bulk prices on request).

Careers for Foreign Language Aficionados and Other Multilingual Types. H. Ned Seelye and J. Laurence Day. VGM Career Horizons, NTC Publishing Group, Chicago. 1992.

CPF National News and *CPF Alberta News* - both published three times a year for members of Canadian Parents for French. Many local chapters also publish community newsletters. For more information, contact the CPF Alberta office (see page 133).

Exchange Opportunities for Canadians - a free booklet listing dozens of Canadian and international programs for students and adults. Canadian Studies and Special Projects Directorate, Citizens' Participation and Multiculturalism Branch, Department of Canadian Heritage, Ottawa ON K1A 0M5, phone: (819) 994-1544, fax: (819) 994-7687.

Exchange Student Survival Kit - $20 (postage included) from AFS Interculture Canada, 1231 St. Catherine St.W., Suite 505, Montreal QC, H3G 1P5.

French Immersion: Process, Product, and Perspectives, compiled by Sally Rehorick and Vivian Edwards - a collection of 26 scholarly articles which deal with the most important aspects of French immersion education (five are written in French). They appeared in *The Canadian Modern Language Review* between 1987 and 1992. $19.95 + $1.40 GST + $3.00 postage and handling = $24.35 from *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 237 Hellems Ave., Welland ON L3B 3B8, phone/fax: (416) 734-3640.

French Immersion: The Trial Balloon That Flew. Sharon Lapkin, Merrill Swain, and Valerie Argue. OISE Press (co-sponsored by Canadian Parents for French), 1983. ISBN 0-7744-0254-7 - designed to encourage 11- to 15-year-old French immersion students to consider their progress in French and English. $4.75 per book + $2.50 handling charge for first book, 50¢ thereafter = subtotal + 7% GST on the subtotal. OISE Press, Scholarly Book Services Inc., 77 Mowat Ave., Suite 403, Toronto ON M6K 3E3, phone: (416) 533-5490, fax: (416) 533-5652.

French Second Language Programs - a guide to French resources, publications, camps, colleges, universities, and international programs of interest to second language students; 1994. $8.00 (postage included, no GST) from Canadian Parents for French - Quebec Branch, P.O. Box 210, Stanstead QC J0B 3E0, phone: (819) 876-7737, fax: (819) 876-5232.

Growing Up Learning: The Key to Your Child's Potential. Walter B. Barbe. Acropolis Books, Washington D.C., 1985. ISBN 0-87491-790-5.

Help! School Starts in September. Joan Craven. Detselig Enterprises Ltd., Calgary, 1993. ISBN 1-55059-064-2 (paperback).

Immersion and the New Core French: A Dynamic Partnership. Kathryn Manzer and Jos Craven Scott. Canadian Parents for French, 1993 - pamphlet available for $1.00 from CPF (see page 133) (bulk prices on request).

Introducing English language arts in early French immersion. Nancy Halsall and Elaine O'Reilly. Canadian Association of Immersion Teachers, 1995.

K12 Canada (periodical). Joan Craven, Editor. SunBeam House Publishing Ltd., 2232 Uxbridge Dr. N.W., Calgary AB T2N 3Z4, phone: (403) 221-9011, fax: (403) 221-9010.

Keeping up your skills - and more - in French. Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages. Canada Communication Group - Publishing, Ottawa, 1993. This 42-page booklet is ideal for immersion graduates. It answers the questions "How can you make time for French?" "What strategies can you use?" and "Where do you find the French-language resources you need?" Order ISBN 0-660-14995-8 (Catalogue No.BT23-2/12-1993) from your local bookseller. (Also available in French.)

Le Répertoire de la vie française en Amérique - French activities throughout North America (especially Canada), including associations, cultural and educational institutions, and events. Le Conseil de la vie française en Amérique, 56, rue Saint-Pierre, 1er étage, Québec QC G1K 4A1, phone: (418) 692-1150, fax: (418) 692-4578.

Le Répertoire des bourses d'études nationales et provinciales - a directory of national and provincial bursaries and prizes available to students who are pursuing postsecondary students in French. $15.00 (postage and handling included) from Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, 325, rue Dalhousie, pièce 440, Ottawa ON K1N 7G2, phone: (613) 562-4624, fax: (613) 562-3995.

Learning Through Two Languages: Studies of Immersion and Bilingual Education. Fred Genesee. Newbury House Publishers, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1987. ISBN 0-06-632260-X (paperback) An overview of second language immersion programs in Canada and the United States. Of interest to researchers, educators, administrators, and university students, this book is also appropriate for parents who want to read about research findings, theoretically-related discussions, and educational implications.

More French, s'il vous plaît! W.R.McGillivray, editor. Canadian Parents for French, 1985 - 17 articles about French second-language education written for parents by researchers, educators, a businessman, and experienced parents. A companion book to *So You Want Your Child to Learn French!* For price and ordering information, contact the CPF Alberta office (see page 133).

Official Languages: Some Basic Facts. Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, revised 1993. ISBN 0-662-58902-5 -booklet explaining the role of his office and of Canada's Official Languages Act. To order a free copy, see p. 134.

Official Languages: Myths and Realities. Department of Canadian Heritage, 1994. ISBN 0-662-58552-6 - booklet explaining Canada's official languages policy. Free from Canadian Heritage, Ottawa ON K1A 0M5, phone: (819) 977-0055.

Paired Reading: Positive Reading Practice. Northern Alberta Reading Specialists' Council, 1991 - a training videotape with accompanying manual. For price and ordering information, contact Filmwest Associates, 2399 Hayman Rd., Kelowna BC V1Z 1Z7, phone: (604) 769-3399, fax: (604) 769-5599.

Parent Involvement and School Boards: A Partnership. Canadian School Boards Association - booklet discussing parent involvement: What is it?, Benefits and Barriers to Parent Involvement, Examples of Parent Involvement Programs, Role of School Boards, and Strategies and Suggestions. $10 plus postage and GST from the CSBA, 130 Slater St., Suite 600, Ottawa ON K1P 6E2, phone: (613) 235-3724, fax: (613) 238-8434.

Parents, Kids, & Schools: Establishing an Academic Success Team in Elementary and High Schools. Avery Zeidman. R.A.Z. Enterprises, Toronto, 1992. ISBN 1-895658-01-2 (paperback). R.A.Z. Enterprises, Box 81502, 1057 Steeles Ave.W., Toronto ON M2R 3X1, phone: (416) 650-1603.

Parents Welcome. Canadian School Boards Association - booklet briefly introducing young parents to their rights and responsibilies vis-à-vis their children's education. $5 plus postage and GST from the CSBA, 130 Slater St., Suite 600, Ottawa ON K1P 6E2, phone: (613) 235-3724, fax: (613) 238-8434 (bulk prices on request).

People Types & Tiger Stripes: A Practical Guide to Learning Styles (second edition). Gordon Lawrence. Centre for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc., Gainesville, Florida, 1979 (reprinted 1989). ISBN 0-935652-08-6.

Research Findings from Immersion Programs Across Canada: A Parent's Guide. James Cummins. Canadian Parents for French, 197_ (exact date unknown) - pamphlet available for $1.00 from CPF (see page 133) (bulk prices on request).

So You Want Your Child to Learn French! (second revised edition). Berkeley Fleming and Margaret Whitla, editors. Canadian Parents for French, 1990 - 20 informative articles by educators, researchers, and experienced parents. For price and ordering information, contact the CPF Alberta office (see page 133).

So...You decided to take late French immersion. Dennis Stolen and Craig Dunbar. Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia, 1988. ISBN 0-7726-1072-X - a binder including copy-ready originals of a student booklet, parent guide, and a parent/teacher companion guide. Crown Publications, 548 Yates St., Victoria BC V8W 1K8.

Summertime Fun in French. Hindi Konok and Lise Cloutier. Canadian Parents for French, 1988 - 4-page overview of existing summer camps available for $1.00 from CPF (see page 133) (bulk prices on request).

Taming the Homework Monster - How to Make Homework a Positive Experience for Your Child. Ellen Klavan. Poseidon Press, New York NY. 1992. ISBN 0-671-74297-3.

Teachers & Parents Together. Maureen Botrie and Pat Wenger. Pembroke Publishers Ltd., Markham ON, 1992. ISBN 0-921217-81-1.

Teaching Students Through Their Individual Learning Styles: A Practical Approach. Rita Dunn and Kenneth Dunn. Reston Publishing Co., Inc., Reston, Virginia, 1978. ISBN 0-87909-808-2.

Tes options postsecondaires / Your Postsecondary Options - a directory of all undergraduate study programs available in French across Canada. $7.00 (postage and handling included) from Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française, 325, rue Dalhousie, pièce 440, Ottawa ON K1N 7G2, phone: (613) 562-4624, fax: (613) 562-3995.

The Basics of Success: How to Give your Child an Edge in School. Sheelagh Schulze and Ethna Henning. Jesop Publishing, Airdrie, Alberta, 1994. ISBN 0-9698692-0-7 (paperback).

The Bilingual Education of Children: The St. Lambert Experiment. W. E. Lambert and G. R Tucker. Newbury House, Rowley, MA, 1972.

The Immersion Registry. Judy Gibson, editor. Canadian Parents for French (annual) - a listing of all French immersion programs throughout Canada (and some in the United States), including schools, grades available, and much more. $37 each or three years for $100. For information on specific programs, contact your local CPF chapter or the CPF Alberta office (see page 133).

You can take it with you: Helping students maintain foreign language skills beyond the classroom. Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

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